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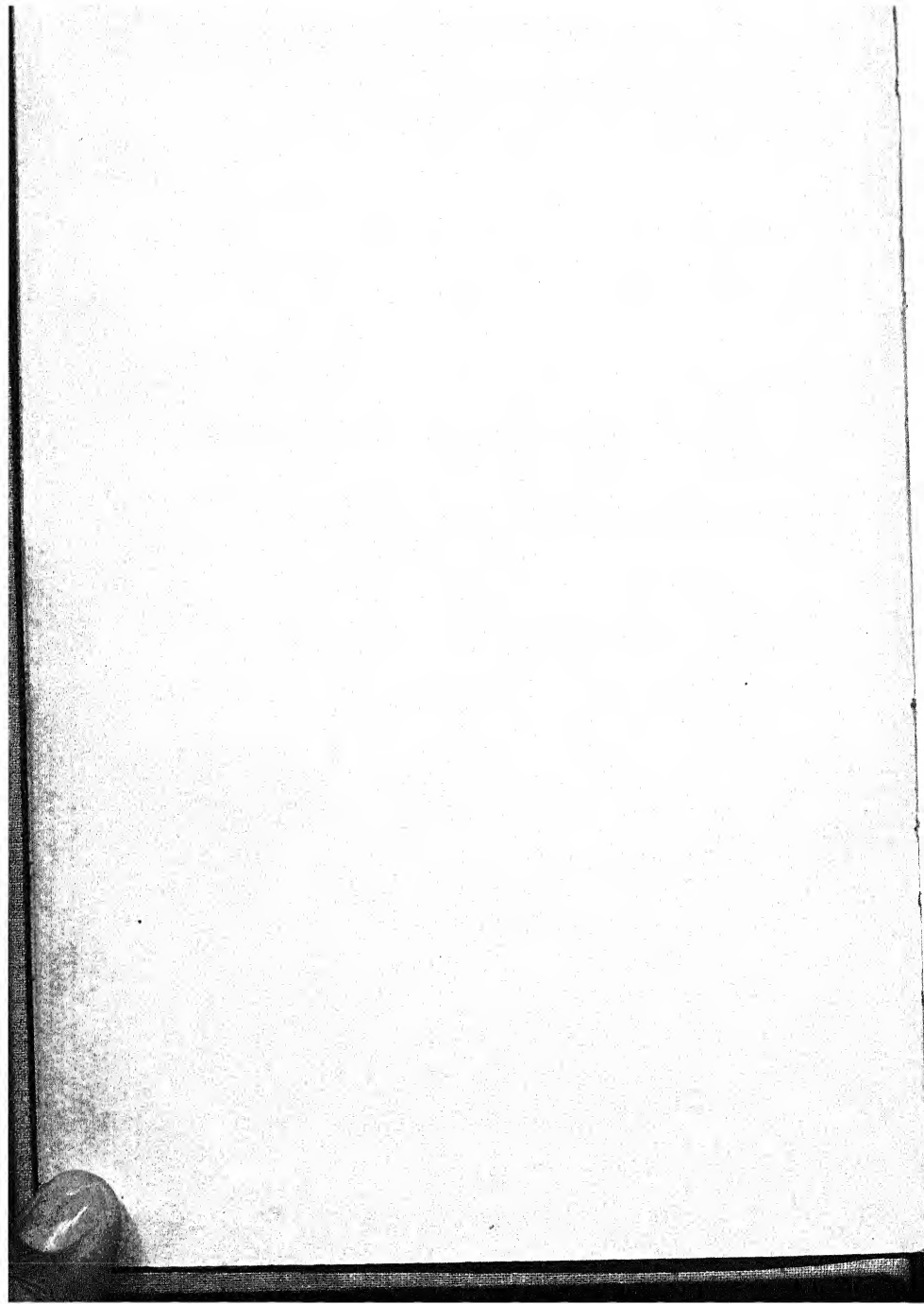


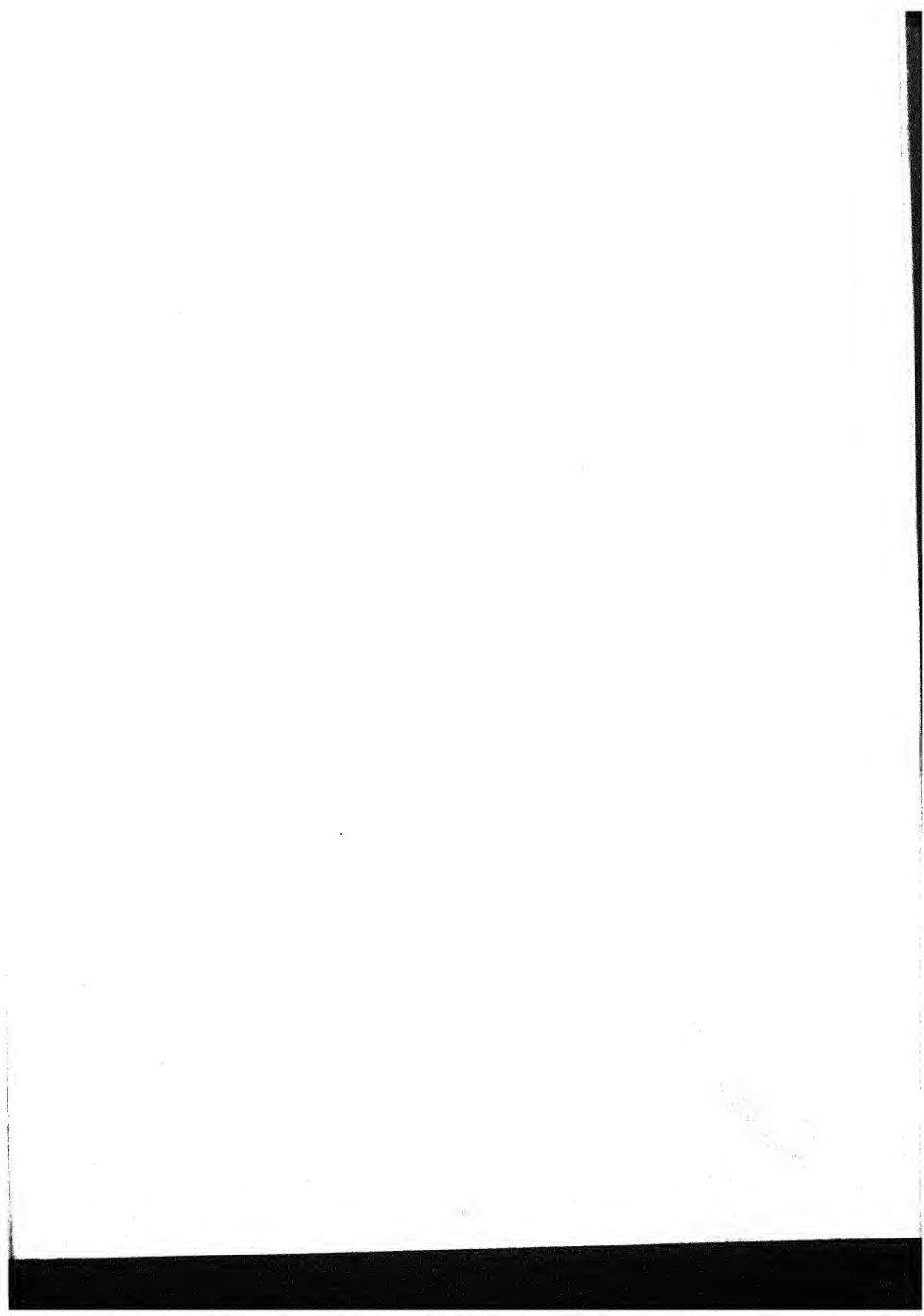




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A FIGHT TO A FINISH

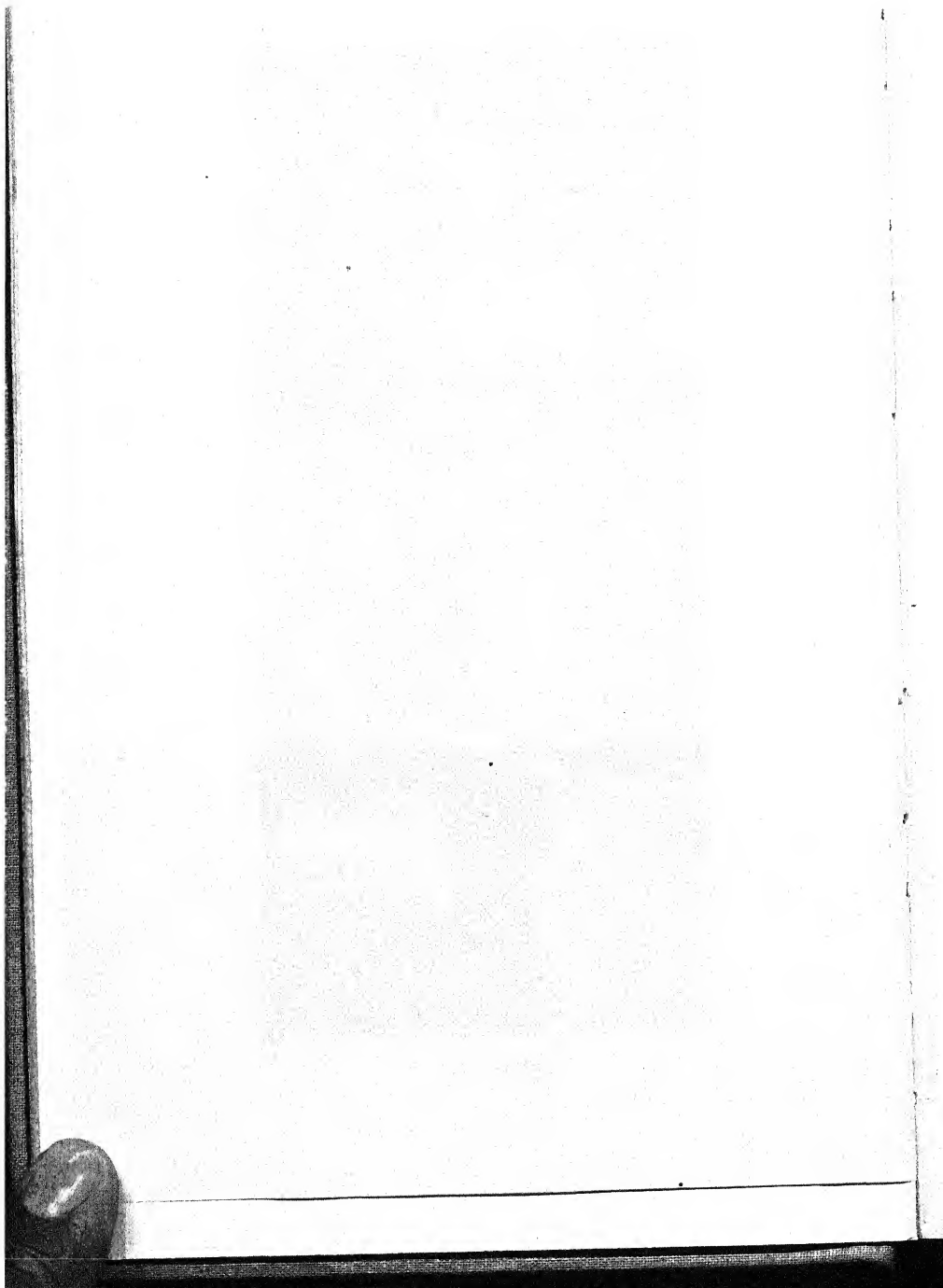






THE AUTHOR





# A FIGHT TO A FINISH

BY

MAJOR C. G. DENNISON, D.S.O.

LATE OFFICER COMMANDING DENNISON'S SCOUTS

WITH TWENTY-SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS



LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON  
NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1904

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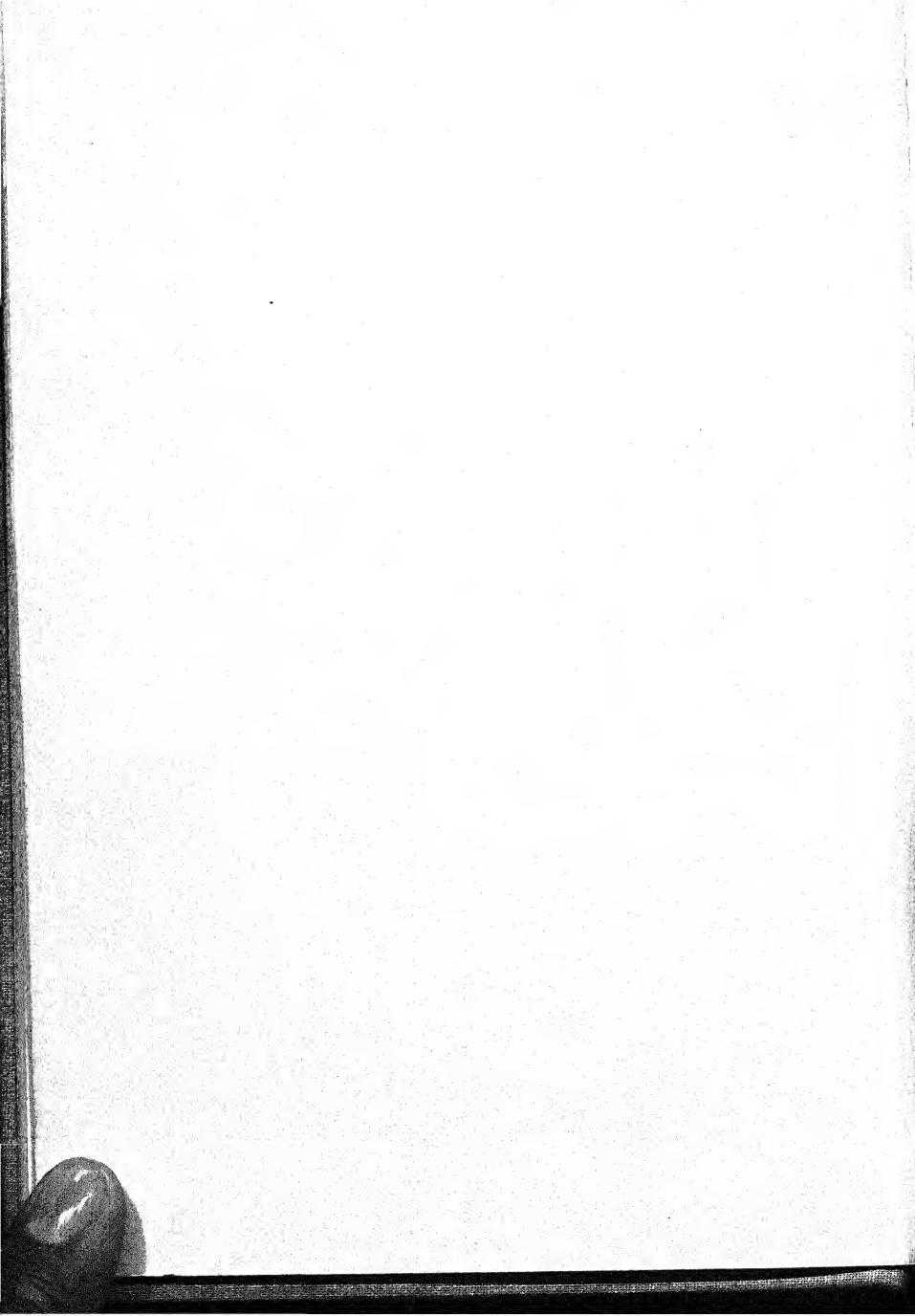
## INTRODUCTION

**R**EADER, in plodding by patient effort over the lines I have written, I must ask you to be as indulgent as possible in your criticisms, and remember that it is written by "only a Colonial." And if my hits are a bit straight, forget not that they might have been more numerous and harder, and yet far within the bounds of truth.

If what little I have written may help to lessen the number of wrecked reputations of statesmen and officers from the Mother Country on the rocks of South African political life and strife, then I shall feel that I have not lived for naught.

My story is plain history of facts that defies contradiction.

C. G. DENNISON

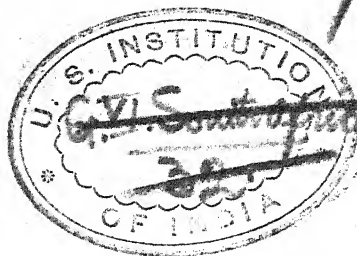


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## A FIGHT TO A FINISH

### COMMENCEMENT OF THE TRANSVAAL WAR OF 1881

THE war of 1881 was the outcome of mistakes and misrule, dating from the Emancipation of the Slaves on the accession of British rule in South Africa, down through later dates after the Kaffir wars of 1846 and 1850-51, when English and Dutch colonists all suffered alike. The former, with their descendants, remained loyal. With the latter the case was different. The cruel mismanagement added fuel to the bottled-up bitterness of years past, strengthened by the fatal error made in our retiring from the Free State, then called "The Sovereignty."

In 1876 the Transvaal Republic was at war with Secocoeni, a Kaffir chief, in the north-east of the State. The late Thomas Francois Burghers was then President of the State (a clever, able man, but too advanced for the times). I accompanied the President as O.C. his bodyguard. (We were called by the Boers "Blaauwkoppen"—blue heads—on account of the blue bands we wore on our hats.)

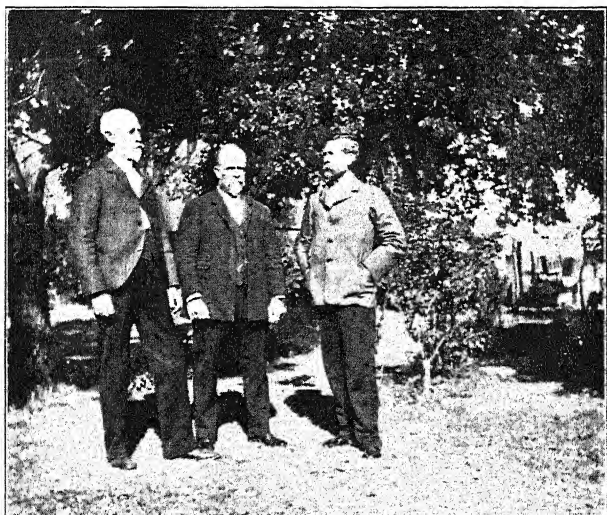
We were thirty men and officers, young, hardy, good shots, and good horsemen. The President valued his guard. The campaign was a failure. A futile attack was made on the stronghold, a second was planned, but the Boers refused to fight again. President Burghers tried to induce them by all the eloquence in his power, but without avail. "Huistoe! huistoe!" ("home! home!") they cried, and in open rebellion commenced drawing their waggons out of the laager circle. After some persuasion they were calmed down. A Council of War sat again, the commando, through their delegates, promised £10 per farm contribution towards paying volunteers to fight for them, but home they would go—and home they went.

On the return of President Burghers to Pretoria a special session of the Volksraad was called. A resolution was passed levying the tax of £10 per farm they—the farmers—themselves had offered, but when this tax was demanded the Boers, among whom the late Groot Adriaan de la Rey was a principal figure, refused to pay. The result was a State with an empty treasury and anarchy ruling throughout.

Petitions followed for annexation through the State Government to the Imperial flag, which was responded to, and in 1877 Sir Theophilus Shepstone with twenty-five mounted men entered Pretoria, and shortly after the Union Jack was hoisted and the country proclaimed British territory. Sir T. Shepstone was the right man; he knew the Boers, and treated them as a man of his experience of their character only could. Combined with experience, he

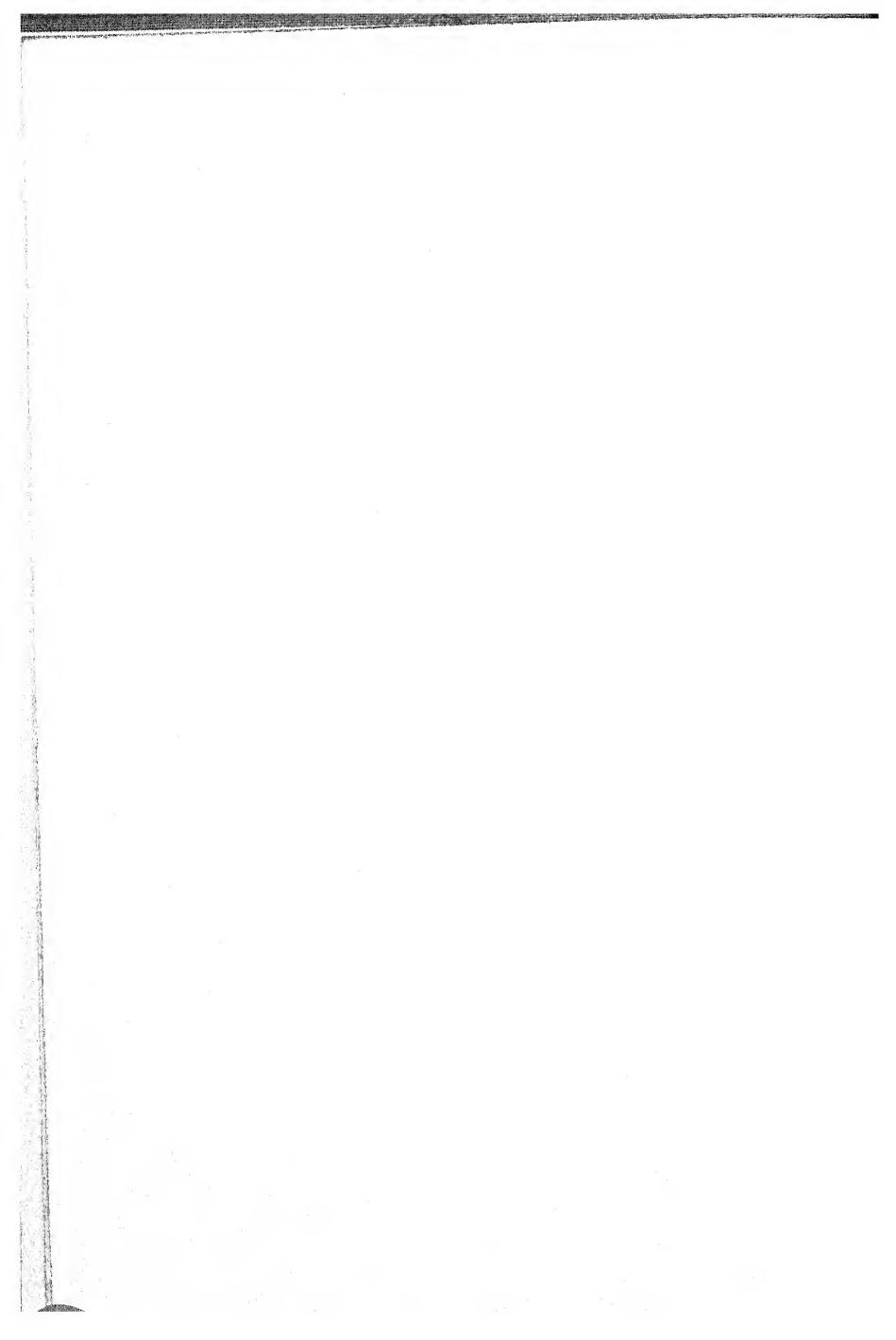


THE LATE THOMAS BURGHEERS  
*President of the Transvaal in 1876 and 1877*



THREE EARLY BRITISH PIONEERS OF THE TRANSVAAL





possessed other qualities—a good, able man with broad-minded principles, a South African of good old stock, he was a man who fitted the position he filled ; but was removed, and superseded by Major Lanyon, a military officer, autocratic in manner and wanting in all the qualities possessed by Shepstone. He could not succeed.

The Boer leaders, Kruger, Pretorius, and Joubert, were, on the annexation, promised that they should have a share in the government of the country. No legislative body was formed—the Administrator, Major Lanyon, was approached again and again on the subject, the promises were repeated, month after month passed, but no effort was made to meet the people. History again repeating itself, Downing Street was too far off, the spring of the big red-tape drum was too far distant, and the unwinding process too slow even for the lethargic Boer of the Transvaal, low murmurings of discontent grew into open and loud expressions of dissatisfaction. Meetings were held, loud and defiant speeches teeming with expressions brimful of war. Worse and worse became the position. Women, in my hearing, incited their husbands to fight ; boys of thirteen and upwards were eager and ready ; and still the Administrator could not and would not realise the danger of the position. On one occasion, while in Pretoria on business, he sent for me and said, "Dennison, what do these Boers mean?" I replied, "They mean to fight, sir." "Fight," he replied, "they cannot fight, you know that." I did my best to convince him of the danger of the position, but no, he treated the matter

with contempt. On another occasion, when again in Pretoria, in company with W. Meyer (Commandant), we were sent for, and the same question was put to Meyer. He confirmed what I had previously said, but was treated as in my case. Major Lanyon did not realise the position until too late. With a few troops scattered about the State and the Home Government misinformed as to the actual position in the Transvaal, the situation was deplorable.

Colonel Anstruther of the 91st, who was at Lydenburg with some troops, was ordered down to Pretoria. So little was the position realised that no warning was given him as to any probable outbreak. He marched down as in ordinary times of peace. Nearing Bronkhorst Spruit, his men marching in loose order, he was met by a messenger from the Boer Commandant, F. Joubert, who with a force of Boers held the ridges in advance with a message to the effect that 'twas war, and the colonel must return. He replied, "My orders are to proceed to Pretoria, and to Pretoria I am going." A second message was sent by Joubert with the same result. Colonel Anstruther could not realise the truth, and, as the men acting under his orders prepared for attack, the deadly fire commenced from the ridges. They fell thick and fast; the colonel also fell, mortally wounded. A few men escaped on horseback, among whom was the late Colonel Egerton, then in charge of the transport. He succeeded in carrying the colours of the regiment with him to Pretoria, where I met him later.

I was in Waterberg at the time—a young man, Jack

Strike by name, was with me—and the first we heard of the Bronkhorst Spruit disaster was when, beyond the warm baths at one Zacharias de Beer's farm, he (de Beer) met me and, as he shook hands, said, "To-day I greet you for the last time as friend, henceforth we are enemies." "Very well," I replied, and walked away. We moved on shortly after to W. Pretorius' farm, where I usually made a stand for trading purposes. I had left some things there on a former occasion, and intended getting them and returning at once. We arrived there the next day, loaded the produce on my waggon, and started about sundown. Both Pretorius and his wife were most anxious about our safety and urged us to travel all night, which we did, and outspanned just as night tinged into the grey dawn of day near a farmhouse on Plat River. We, however, took the precaution to draw our waggon well into the bush. We had been camped about an hour, when a native in charge of the farm (his master and family were away) came quietly to us and told me that a commando of Boers were coming out of Waterberg on their way to a place of gathering, and advised our moving at once. We needed no second warning: never were oxen more quickly yoked, and away we went, taking care to avoid the road so as to create no dust, and as we got on to the higher ground we could see the white tents of waggons and the dust of the horsemen coming down the decline to the farmhouse we had left. No time was lost; we pushed on as fast as possible, outspanning for short intervals during the day and night, and the next morning crossed the Crocodile at Zout-

pansdrift, where we caught up to a Boer I knew well, who with his family were on the trek to Magaliesberg. He had just crossed as we reached the river, which was swollen, and, as we were crossing, my waggon struck against a large stone. The water was rising rapidly, but our Boer friend came to our assistance and hooked his span on to mine, as our leaders were within reach from the opposite bank, and dragged us out, while another Boer from the opposite side shouted, "What, you helping the Rooineks! I would rather shoot them!" showing himself a fair sample of the murderous class, and I knew the man to be like many of his kind, a hypocritical, bloodthirsty scoundrel. Not by any means do I give this character to all, for there are many, many good and true men among the South African Boers, men of noble traits, but, alas! too many were of the kind alluded to by Burns as "drinking whisky all the week and butter-milk on Sunday." No sin was too bad for them, and yet they could go to church on Sunday, or to the periodical "Naachtmaal" (Communion) and partake, or by psalm singing and loud prayers condone the black page of the past week.

The troops at Potchefstroom had on my return to Rustenburg (my home) been attacked in the Court House and surrendered, among whom was Commandant Peter Raaf, as brave a leader as ever led South African irregulars, and who died at Bulawayo during the Matabele War. Peter Raaf commanded Raaf's Rangers in 1879 in Zululand, and was at the fatal Hlobane Mountain on the 28th March, where many a brave boy lost his life. It was on the same

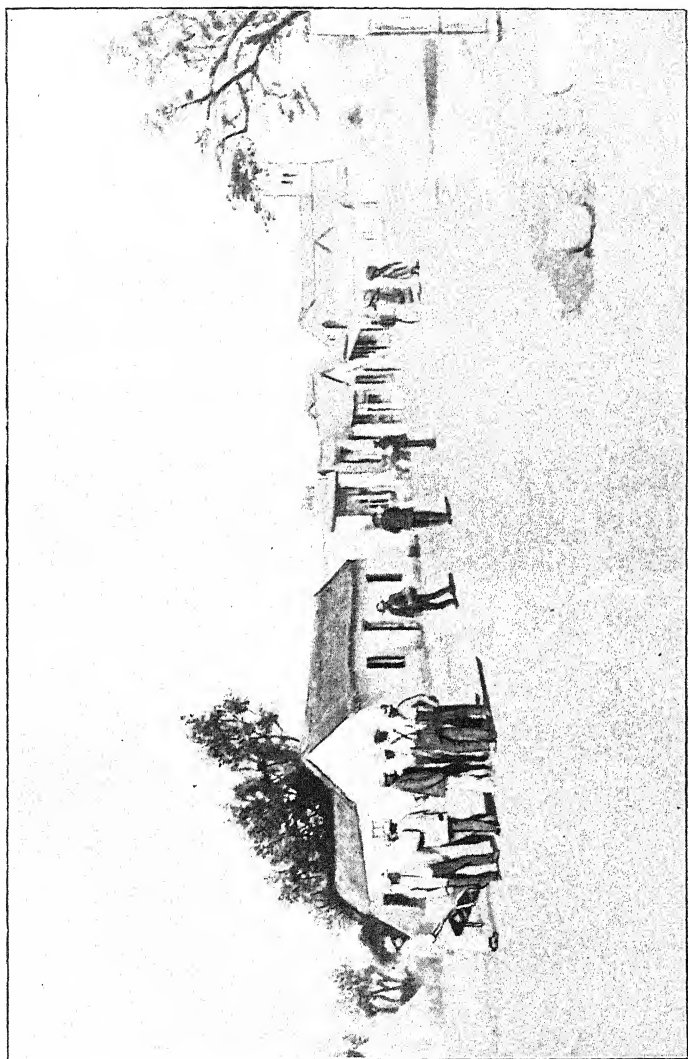
day that the late Colonel F. Weatherley, with his son Rupert, fell, besides nearly the whole of our squadron of the Border Horse in action that day. I was then second in command of the corps, and of the officers was the only one who escaped, and seven men.

After the attack on our camp (Kambula) the day following, and the repulse of the Zulu army, I was ordered back to Pretoria and took command of the corps, later served under Major Carrington (now General Sir F., so well known later to Zeerust) with Sir Garnet Wolseley's column at Secocoeni's, and was present and took an active part in the capture of that chief's stronghold. I give this merely as a glance at events prior to 1881. My thoughts lead me back to a much earlier date, when I first smelt powder, in 1865, during the war of the Free State with the Basutos, as trooper then in the Bloemfontein Rangers under Captain Hanger, and further back still to the Kaffir War of 1850-51, when my father was wounded and died of his wounds some years after; but we have now to do with a later and greater scene in England's great, but often mismanaged, conquests, too often paid too dearly for, when at so much less the same results could have been gained.

After the surrender of the party in the Court House at Potchefstroom the fort outside the town (hastily thrown up and unfinished) was attacked and nobly defended by our troops. Some of the English prisoners were made to work in the Boer trenches exposed to the fire from our fort, and it was there a friend of mine, Finlay by name, was smashed by a

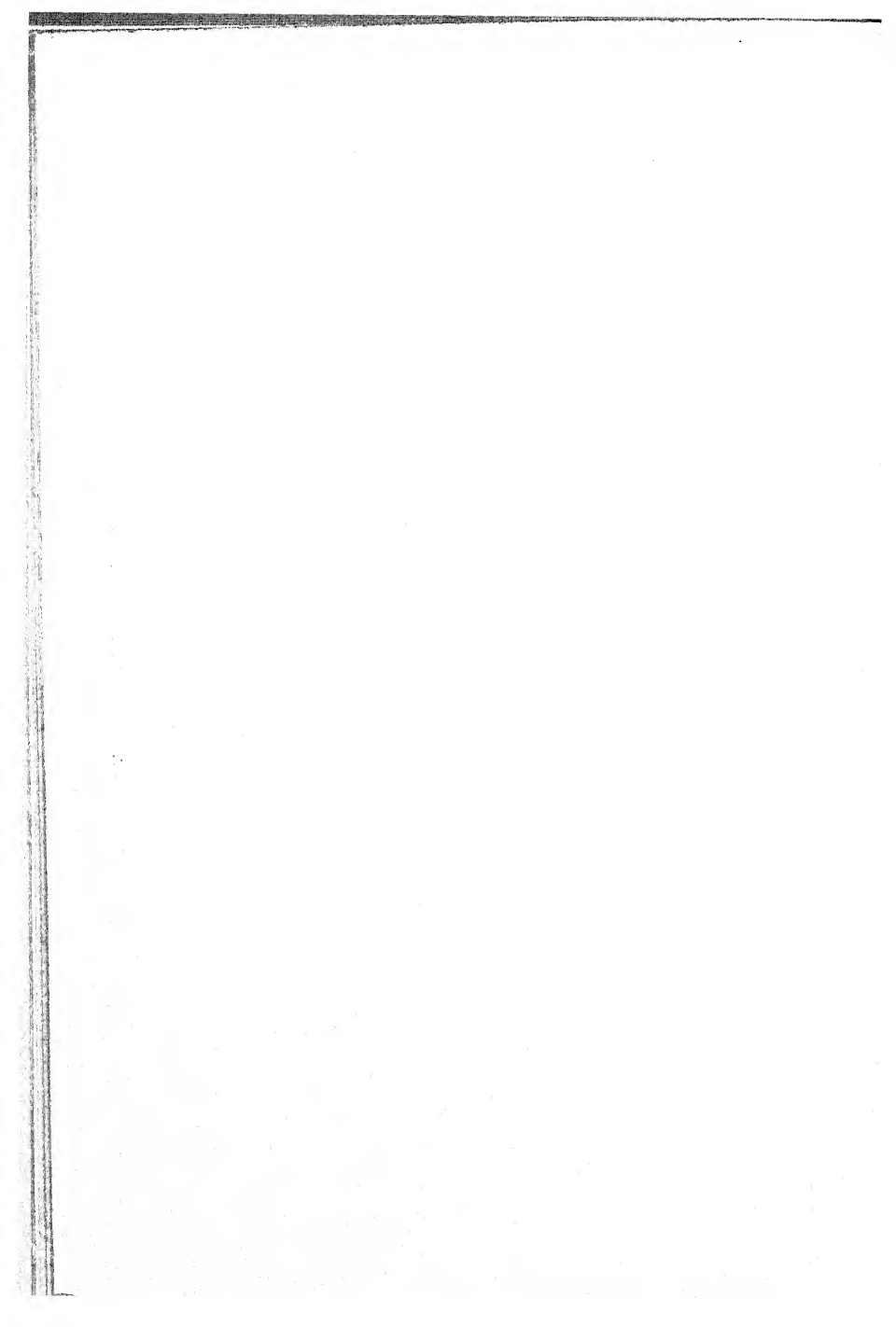
shell from one of our own guns ; and this was the act of a Boer general so well cared for by us after his capture during the last war.

Rustenburg was garrisoned by a company of the 21st Scots Fusileers under Captain Aunchlick. Prior to the arrival of the Boer commando under Commandant Van der Walt, Captain Aunchlick wished me to go into the fort, but I said, "No ; my single arm will not help you much there. I can be more useful to you outside," which later events proved, for I was able to keep communication open between headquarters, Pretoria, and Rustenburg by the aid of runners, to whom proper recompense was promised, but who, only now after the close of the last war, got a small donation for their work ; but at any rate, however small, our promises to the noble natives, who so often risked their lives, have been somewhat acknowledged. How often, unfortunately, are those who risk so much, and suffer so much, cast aside, forgotten, unrequited, while strangers inherit their birthright. England, are your colonies worth so little to you, and especially the loyal sons of South Africa who have fought and bled for the flag ? Surely not ! Influence, not service, counts most. A man may have done not a single act to forward Great Britain's interest, may have never fired a shot in aid of our cause, but has had influence to back him ; good, trusty, experienced, and able men have been cast on one side to give place to others such as I have named. Too true ; as a British general once said to me, "Services, Dennison, are all very well in their way, but influence, my dear fellow, is worth



A STREET IN RUSTENBURG





gallons more than service"; and, sad to have to say it, so it is.

Both Rustenburg and Potchefstroom held out till the last (and, in fact, in not a single case was a fort of ours taken by the enemy). In the latter fort the sufferings of our people were great (some ladies were unfortunately among the number), owing to the scarcity of provisions and the heavy rains. At Rustenburg, although the men—including thirteen volunteers, who went into the fort from the town—suffered much from the constant heavy rains, they were well supplied with food. In fact, during the siege food was frequently carried in by our loyal men, among whom Johannes Gladhaar, a German lad, son of the miller of Rustenburg, was most prominent. A powerful boy, he frequently carried pockets of sugar and bags of flour to the fort; but this was, of course, only possible when friendly-disposed guards were on duty.

Commandant Van der Walt was superseded at Rustenburg by Sarel Elloff, a brother-in-law of the late President Kruger. Elloff was most bitter against the British loyals of the town. On one occasion he commandeered extortionate sums of money from them, and on two of our townsmen expostulating with him, he sent them off to the fort, including the sheriff of the town. A party of three were driven up to "starve" with the other Rooineks in the "gat" (hole), as he called the fort, by forty mounted Boers, who were, of course, not fired on by our people, as they could plainly see what the action meant. Captain Aunchlick was most humane, and tried to avoid as

much as possible unnecessary bloodshed, for though an opportunity was offered, as the Boers returned to the town, to fire on them, it was not done. The three sent to the fort were Messrs. John Wagner, old Stephanus (or, as he was called, "Fanie") du Toit, and Walters, the sheriff; the latter being an excellent shot, did good service from the fort.

The Boers brought an old nine-pounder to bear on the fort, which did no damage, and later another gun manufactured of tire iron by one Marthinus Ras, who lived in the district. This gun was a most ingenious piece of work, and showed the capability of the Boer. Ras was killed during the last war near Derde Poort on the Marico by Linchwe's Kaffirs.

My house was situated on the outside street of the town; the Boers took cover near it, and drew the fire from the fort on to the house. I was obliged to move my family out to Wolhuter's Kop, thirty miles distant, between Rustenburg and Pretoria, on the main road, from which place despatches could be run with greater ease to and from Pretoria, as I have already stated, by the aid of Kaffirs to Wolhuter's Kop from Pretoria, from whence I carried them into Rustenburg in the hollowed cane of my riding-whip, which was found out later by the Boers, twenty of whom were sent by Commandant Elloff to take me prisoner or shoot me if I resisted. I must here state that at Wolhuter's Kop I had buried four Martini rifles and some cases of ammunition, had loopholed my stable, and with three white men and one half-caste, for whom I had another gun, we were prepared for contingencies. The Boers, with the

field-cornet in charge, arrived at Sterkstroom one morning, and on being asked by the owner of the farm there where they were going, the field-cornet showed him his written instructions. Marthinus Barnard was the farmer's name. On reading the instructions, he said, "I would advise you to keep clear of Wolhuter's Kop; the Rooineks there have got good guns and shoot straight." "Well," said the doughty leader, "then I shall turn back, for my orders are not to lose any of my men." I had with me John Weatherley, my late colonel's brother, Jack Strike (who later got into Pretoria, joined a corps there, and did good service), Morris (my manager), and the half-caste Cornelius. So once more we escaped, and by the aid of the friendly action of Barnard. I say once more, for narrow escapes were of frequent occurrence in those as in later days; and were it possible to collect the history of many men's lives during the different war periods of South Africa, such a work would be one of startling interest.

A Scotchman of the name of Young, who had served with me as sergeant during the war of 1876, refused to take up arms against his own countrymen, and defied the Boers at his farm on the Selons River. He on one occasion drove off a number of them, having built a small fortification on a kopje overlooking his house, and as the Boers advanced, he opened fire and, single-handed, was victorious. Later on he went to the laager of loyal Boers, numbering about 400, who had refused to take up arms against the English. Elloff on one occasion asked for permission to attack them, but the reply he got from

Paul Kruger was, "No, leave them alone; we have enemies enough in front of us to deal with."

At Haartebeestefontein near Klerksdorp were also a number of Boers in laager, who would not take part against the English. A little tact on the part of Major Lanyon and the war of 1881 had not occurred. Even on the north of Magaliesburg, among the Boers, were men who were in favour of British rule, as was proved by the fact that the natives were incited to rise on a given night, burn the farmers' houses, *but were not to shed blood*. This was kept from me, but on a Saturday one of my despatch bearers, David, came to me and said, "Master, the chiefs, Cobus and Frederick Magalie, have sent me to tell you that on Monday morning, at daylight, you must have your waggons loaded, and if you want more the chiefs will supply them, for all the people who are for the English must gather at Bethany (a German mission station near the junction of Sterkstroom and Crocodile River). "Why?" I asked. "Because," he replied, "we (the natives) intend rising from Pila where the sun sinks to Zwaartbooy where the sun rises, and we shall burn all the Boer houses, so that, when the Boer comandos hear, they will return to help their families, and the English can then come over the Drakensberg, but we are told not to kill anyone." After reflecting for a moment I said, "Go, David, and tell the chiefs to come to me: I must see and speak with them to-morrow (Sunday) morning." On the next morning I was informed that the chiefs were waiting for me in my stable, and I went to them. After

greeting, I said, "David has given me your message and I have heard, but do you not remember what the Government told you to do before the war?" "Yes," replied one of the chiefs, "you read us the letter from the Government, and it said we were to sit still: Paul Kruger also told us this." "And now," I said, "if you disobey the orders of both the Government and Paul Kruger you will be between two fires, one or the other will burn you." "That is why we sent to warn you that you might know and advise us. The white men said you were not to know for you would stop us." While we were talking, a messenger came to the door and warned us of the approach of two men, who were friends; shortly after the two came to the stable and, after greeting, one of them—a Dutchman—said in English, "This is what we wanted, but we were afraid you would go against us." "Go!" I replied, interrupting him, "you people are mad, go into the house and talk to my wife. I will talk to the chiefs." They left at once. I then arranged with the chiefs to send David into Pretoria again that night, and that they should abide by the tenor of the letter which would come from Pretoria. They then left for their homes. The white men had also gone.

David left for Pretoria the same night, and on the fourth morning after, about two a.m., he knocked at my bedroom window. I got up and received the cipher despatch for Rustenburg garrison, and the letters to myself and one to the chiefs, which, after reading, I took down to the Rev. Jordt just as the day was dawning, and we together rode over to the

chief, Frederick Magalie, and read the letters from Pretoria : they were from the Administrator Lanyon. In the letter to the chiefs they were warned to remain quiet, and that they would be severely punished if they took any part in the war. They seemed satisfied, and thus what would in all probability have ended in a massacre of women and children was stopped, for, allowing that the local tribes might not have murdered, there were at that time several hundred Matabele at Magatos near Rustenburg who would not have stopped at burning houses.

The different actions and repulses our troops had at "Schuinshoogte," Laing's Nek, and lastly the fatal Amajuba are too well known, so it is needless for me to dwell on them. Suffice it to say the climax to England's mistakes was reached when we gave the country back to the Boers. Justice and firmness were what was required, and no '81 war would have resulted, nor the last great struggle costing so many millions of money, but worse still, the costly lives of so many thousands of our sons. And is the action of the Imperial Government of to-day tending to a successful issue in the future of the States it governs? England may succeed in bringing about a fusion of races, but what may the result be in years to come? The independent British sons of South Africa may not forget the arbitrary treatment of the past. Have loyal South Africans been given a fair share of the plums of the service? I say, no! And where by dint of hard work billets have been obtained by our men, they have in most cases been placed under men (or youths) fresh from other countries, in many cases

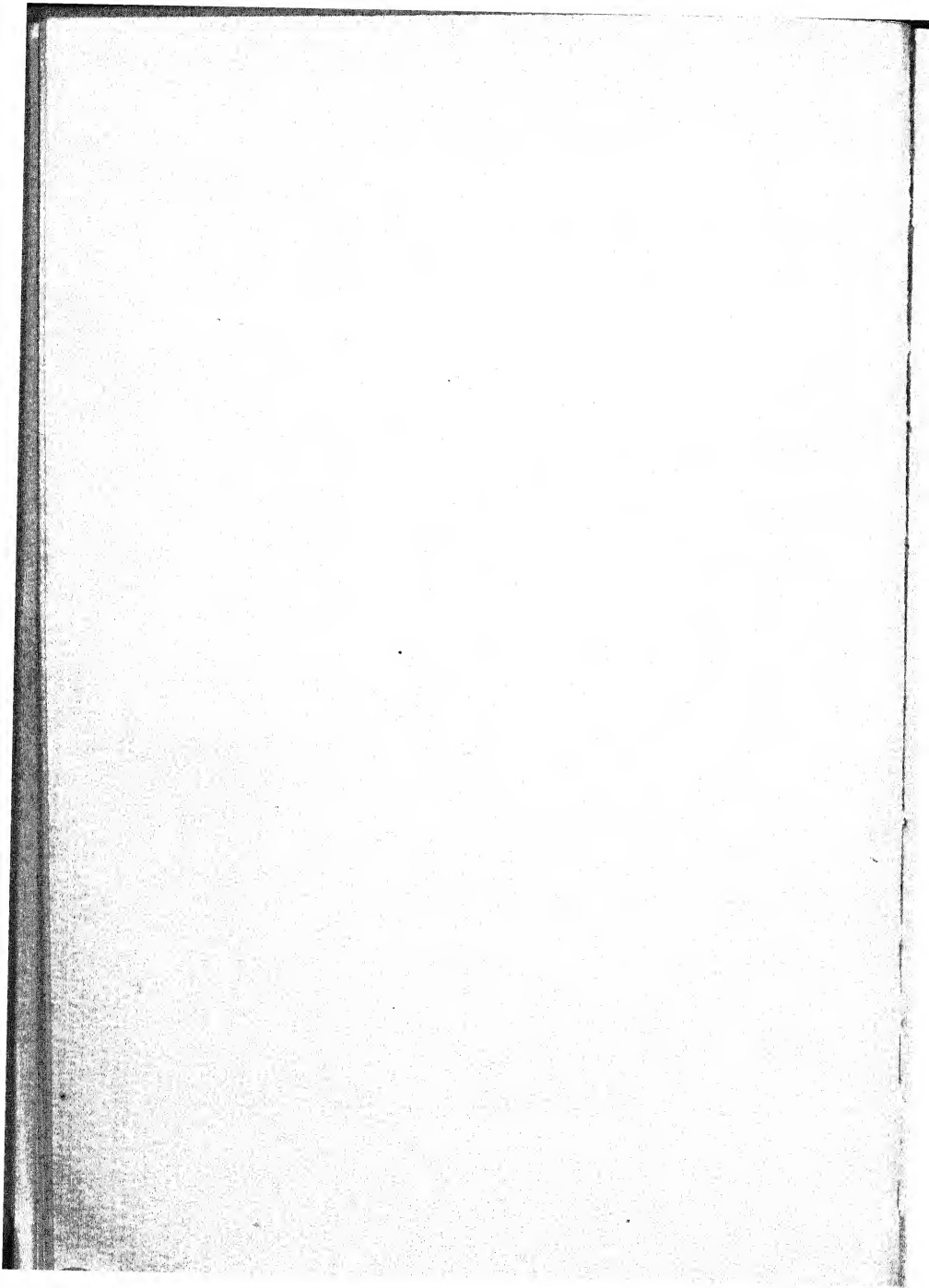
inexperienced and ignorant, and who only "hang on" to the positions by the aid of a clerk who can do the correspondence for them; and so again is history repeating the past in South Africa.

The finale of the '81 war is known. We made "*Peace with honour.*" The words conveyed the hope, but the facts remained.

And what was the effect on the native mind in the Transvaal? Undoubtedly one of mistrust of England. They had been told we had come to stay. The well-known utterance of Sir Garnet Wolseley they were well acquainted with, "As long as the sun shines." And may it be so now and for ever in the future as confederated States of South Africa under the flag we have ever loved!

In this preamble to the last great war, I have merely skimmed over a few of the details of past fatal errors, not with a view of giving vent to my feelings so much as with the idea of trying in my small way to help, by showing up fatal mistakes, in building up to a nobler, better standard our great and grand Empire.





## REMINISCENCES OF THE GREAT BOER WAR OF 1899-1902

### CHAPTER I

"THE Boers have crossed the border at Kraaipan," was the news given me hurriedly by a friend as I rode up Vryburg Street on the 13th October, 1899, on my return from a scouting expedition to the border the night before, "and broken up the line at the bridge. The armoured train goes to-night with guns and ammunition for Mafeking," he continued. "And," I queried, "who goes in charge, and when does the train start?" He told me. And that evening I went down to the station just in time to see the armoured train steam off to its destiny, its destruction, with its fated cargo of brave men recklessly rushed by folly into the hands of the enemy. Thus, then, did the war for the predominancy of races break out, the war foreseen by so many of us for years past. The war as ascribed to many causes, franchise, etc., but the inevitable struggle between Britain and Boer had commenced in dread reality.

I had for some time been in charge of the Intelligence Department for the district of Vryburg previous to the war. The ill-fated Major Scott, C.P.,

was in command of the district, sent up from Kimberley but a few weeks prior to the outbreak to manage, with a handful of Cape Police and a volunteer corps, the Vryburg Rifles, in whose ranks rebels were not wanting; a district whose inhabitants counted 95 per cent. of a people in open rebellion. The one and only wise course open was adopted by him, and that was the evacuation of Vryburg. A bare fortification, untenable, unprovisioned, away from the only means of obtaining water, he was at last forced by dint of persuasion to abandon and fall back on Kimberley; no means of communication either with Kimberley or Mafeking, as the wires were cut north and south by the Boers; suffering from mental affliction, a respected, brave, and good soldier, the strain was too much for him. He imagined himself disgraced, and died the day after he left Vryburg. The remainder of the Cape Police with their maxims safely reached Kimberley, and nobly aided in the defence of that place. The part the Cape Police took during the siege and later during the war is one that will ever bear comparison with the best of corps that served during the war. I cannot refrain here from remarking that the Cape Police, as I knew them six months after the war, was, through mismanagement, by no means the good, able old force of warriors that served before and during the long struggle. Youths, fresh from England or elsewhere, formed the principal part of the strength, old hands drifted away, many tried and good men wished to join, in many instances men I myself had recommended, but they were over

thirty years of age, beyond the age laid down by the sage(?) rulers of the corps, experience and service sacrificed to ignorance: how often again is history to repeat itself? As the facts connected with the evacuation of Vryburg by the Cape Police are not generally known, I have mentioned the foregoing, and may add that repeated efforts were made by the loyal inhabitants of Vryburg to induce the Cape Government to send us men, provisions, and arms, but without avail. The following is a copy of a statement sent by me to Colonel Kekewich from Kuruman, October 13th, 1899:—

“COLONEL KEKEWICH, O.C., Kimberley.

“From the first I pointed out to the late Major Scott that the position he held at Vryburg was by no means a good one, and recommended that the prison be fortified and point opposite commanding water, that with the sandbags the prison could be made a very strong position. I told him that a number of English colonials were willing to assist if he did so. On a night of a false alarm I again went to Major Scott at midnight with Mr. W. Crosbie, of Vryburg, and spoke about the position of his camp and its extensive area to be commanded by the limited number of men under his command, etc. He said, ‘Do you wish me to lay down my arms?’ I replied, ‘Certainly not, there are other ways of doing things.’ He said, ‘My orders are to defend this camp.’ Mr. Crosbie also made some remark about the place being a difficult one to protect, and afterwards said to me as we walked back to town that he would also take part in the defence

if Major Scott would move into a better position. On Saturday night, the 15th October, the two Hannays—Robert and Angus—my late eldest son Alec, and myself agreed to go into camp and assist Major Scott at any cost. We went to the camp that night to see Major Scott, but were refused admittance. On Sunday morning the magistrate, Mr. R. Tillard, came to my house and asked me to attend a meeting at the court-house at twelve o'clock midday, that he had seen Major Scott again, and that the major had asked him to get the feelings of the people on the subject of the withdrawal of the Cape Police. The meeting was held, and a resolution passed that the O.C. forces be requested to withdraw and the volunteer corps be disbanded. I had previously strongly recommended the disbandment of this corps, as there were many among them who could not be trusted. This can be borne out by the Vryburg loyal people, such as Messrs. Crosbie, Fincham, Hannays, Browns, and many others.

“I was placed in a most awkward position, as the people wanted me as their leader, and I could not act without authority. I did not see how I could command a town guard under the adverse circumstances. I wished to act with Major Scott, but was debarred by the position he took up. I again and again offered my personal assistance in any way he might consider most useful, but he never made use of my offer. He seemed very much depressed on several occasions that I met him. On one occasion, on returning from the border, I found him in the compound behind the police barracks. He seemed very

much distressed, and said, 'At Kimberley and Mafeking they have the best of engineering experts, while this place is left to one police officer.' I said, 'Scott, I have repeatedly offered to help you.' He replied, 'Yes, true; but I cannot move from here.'

"I consider that the wisest course Major Scott could have adopted was the one taken, viz., the evacuation of Vryburg; and I fail to see that any dishonour could be attached to such an act under the circumstances. The Vryburg people again and again had pointed out through the R.M., Mr. Hoole (prior to the arrival of Mr. Tillard), and also by direct communication with His Excellency the High Commissioner, the defenceless state of Vryburg, and asked that 400 men with artillery be sent to assist us. The majority of the Vryburg loyal men were willing to fight to the last, had an opportunity been given them.

"The conclusion I came to regarding Major Scott was that at last he knew his position, in case of an attack, was a hopeless one, knowing, as he did, that the Boers had artillery and were in strong force, but wanted a resolution of the loyal townspeople to support his action. I wrote him on Sunday morning, and attached a copy of my letter.

"(Sgd.) C. G. DENNISON."

The following is a copy of my letter to Major Scott referred to:—

"The O.C., Vryburg.

"VRYBURG, 15.10.99.

"DEAR SIR,—As I feel that my efforts have been misunderstood, I shall not again approach you

at your camp on any subject concerning your position at present. I may merely say that whatever I have suggested has been with the best intentions, and I now for the last time take the liberty of pointing out the fact that your camp is one that, under ordinary circumstances, would require '*some* protecting'; that I do not and cannot think that the Commissioner realises that the position of your camp is in every way bad. May I suggest as an open course that you evacuate with your men and maxim, and give the volunteers an opportunity of disbanding? Your force is no protection to the town, nor can you prevent the Boers from hoisting their flag in Vryburg. The wire is cut, and you are now left to use your own judgment; by evacuating you can fall back on Kimberley or Mafeking. You will thus retain your arms and ammunition and maxim, which will otherwise fall into the hands of the Boers, as well as those of your men who might survive the attack. Shortly summarised thus:—Your position is one you cannot hold against artillery; resistance means loss of life and the endangering of the town—your loss, the enemy's gain. Then how do you best benefit your country? By saving to that country the lives and services of good men, besides the arms, ammunition, and maxim. Your communication with headquarters is cut off. You have now to use your own judgment; and I say, and say it earnestly, that when the time comes leave your position, and no dishonour attaches itself to you, but will be execution of judgment.

"Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) C. G. DENNISON."

On Sunday afternoon, the 16th October, my daughter and some friends walked up to the cemetery, but returned quickly to inform me that they had seen clouds of dust in the direction of Vlakfontein, which was presumed to be the Boer commando advancing. I changed my clothes, bade farewell to my family, mounted my horse, and went to Kuruman, ninety-eight miles west, passing on my way whites and blacks flying from the advancing foe. Native women and men carrying large bundles on their heads, besides infants on their backs, and dragging their young children along, flying from the dreaded Boer. In many cases whites were in the same state of terror. No advance of a barbarous foe could have caused greater fright. "Where are the Boers?" "Are they coming on?" "Will they shoot us?" etc., etc., were among the many questions put to me. The scene was pitiful but ludicrous.

On account of my horse getting sick, I was delayed, and did not reach Kuruman until the 18th. At Kuruman I met Captain Bates, who was in charge of a detachment of the Cape Police in the district, and whom I had known in the earlier native war of 1879. A good plucky sort was Bates, and a man of considerable experience.

Immediately on my arrival I wired to Colonel Kekewich, O.C., Kimberley, for instructions, and was ordered by him to assist in the defence of Kuruman if necessary, and by all means keep open communication between Kimberley and Mafeking. This I did by means of native runners, who usually succeeded in getting into Mafeking by circuitous routes,



and later, when, during the siege of Mafeking, the place was being closely invested, the despatches were handed by the natives to Lady Sarah Wilson, who was staying at "Mosita," at J. Keely's farm, and by whose kind aid the letters were sent on by her trusted boys to their destination. Several of the native runners were shot in cold blood by the Boers, many of whom take a delight in putting natives up in a road and coolly shooting them down. The shedding of native blood is not counted as murder by many of them; on the contrary, they talk and laugh over the deed, describing the fear and agony of the poor sufferer with jeers and laughter. But all are not thus; too many, nevertheless, can be charged.

I had many difficulties to contend against, and some caused by men who should have given every assistance.

By the aid of my late son Alec, who remained in Vryburg, I was able to get information to and from that place. This was just after the occupation by De la Rey, who had hoisted the Transvaal flag, and stated in his speech "that the flag he had that day hoisted should never be struck otherwise than over the dead bodies of his burghers." Vain boast! One is apt to recall the words of General Sir Garnet Wolseley: "As long as the sun shines," etc. No dead bodies were there to get over for the purpose; no defence was made by them; they deemed the alternate course the best, and acted on it. Acting on information I had got from Vryburg, that we were to be attacked, we built small fortifications around the base camp on the most prominent positions,

dividing our small force of fighting men, 63 in all, among the different redoubts. We had really about 120 men of all sorts, black and white, the majority refugees, but only the number I have given were available for bearing arms.

About this time I had occasion to warn Van Zyl, who, I knew, was inciting the Boers to rebel. Captain Bates and myself were walking down from his camp to the court-house when, on passing Van Zyl's house, I noticed several saddles outside and some horses grazing about. I immediately went to his house and called him outside, telling him that I knew perfectly that he was inciting the people to arms against the Imperial Government. He laughed aloud and said, "Do you think I should be such a fool?" I replied, "I say what I know, not what I think, and I warn you that severe punishment awaits you after the war, if you live." I then left him, but had him watched, and this man was never punished, but lives now in the Transvaal on his ill-gotten gains.

On a Sunday in the early part of November, 1899, came the Boer ultimatum from the commandant, one Visser by name, demanding our surrender, to which, after consultation by the magistrate, Captain Bates, and myself, a reply was sent suitable to the occasion. We refused to surrender and defied the rebel gang.

I was in command of twenty men on the south-east ridge, about a mile and a half from the base camp.

On the Monday morning following, having made all arrangements necessary at the camp, I rode up to my forts, for I had two on the ridge, one with ten

men in charge of Herbert Brown—a Queenstown lad full of pluck, of whom I shall have more to say later on—about one hundred and thirty paces distant from my fort, commanding from its position the approach from the south side ; mine commanding the north end, also east and west, as was the case with Brown's position. Captain Bates, with Mr. Hilliard the R.M., were in charge of the main camp with about twenty-five men of all sorts.

On my arrival at the forts I sent my horse back with a man who accompanied me for that purpose. And hardly had the man gone with the two horses ere the head of the Boer commando came in sight on the Pokanie road. When about 2,500 yards distant fire was opened on them, unfortunately, from one of our forts about 1,200 yards on my north in charge of Corporal Gass. This scattered the Boers, who might otherwise have come on to closer quarters and given us a better opportunity of damaging them. On getting within about 1,000 yards of my position they opened fire from the low ridges in our front, which we returned with a cheer from both our small forts. The war with us had begun, the war only to last about six months, as so many of us thought! "Only a gallop over from Mafeking to Johannesburg" as one of Baden-Powell's officers said to me at Mafeking. "No Jameson's affair this time, old chap." True, as a whole, a legitimate war, but in many cases how much worse the blunders, the disasters, the great war history can bear record.

The Boers, after making several attempts to get the best of us, moved round on to a fort held by a few

men under Sergeant Child of the Cape Police, where they made a most determined attempt but were repulsed, losing several of their number. Again and again did they make such attempts (as their well-known want of solid pluck allowed them) to take one or other of our little forts, but without success, outnumbering us as they did by twelve to one. Thus, for a week things went on, when, on a Saturday night, they suddenly withdrew. On the Sunday morning not a sign of Boers was seen. They had gone—but only to return the following week with reinforcements. A force now of over 1,300 men to take 63! Again, the same as before, attack after attack was made on our little fortifications, but with as little success. One large gap, affording the Boers an opportunity of getting within our lines, we could not defend. This was a rugged ridge behind the magistrate's dwelling and public offices—a rugged ridge out of which the Kuruman River takes its rise. But just before the Boers sent us their ultimatum I sent for the native headmen and warned them to keep their people and stock away from the ridge, as we had placed dynamite mines there, knowing that this information would soon reach the ears of the enemy. And so it proved, for the Boers carefully kept aloof from this point. And only after their reinforcements had arrived from Griqualand West, under one Field-Cornet Wessels (who had more grit in him than the other leaders), did they venture down this ridge, and took possession of M. Colley's store, thus cutting me off from the water, as we got our supply at nights from near his house out of the river.

It was on the same night that the Boers got possession of Colley's store that they made, for the fifth time, a most determined attack on Brown's fort. Actually getting up to the walls, they pushed some of the sandbags down on the men inside with their guns. I plainly heard Wessels call out in Dutch, "Will you give in now?" But the reply he got was, "No! I have never given in to a Boer in my life, and less so to-night." (This was from W. Dunbar, of the Cape Police, as brave a boy as ever carried a rifle; his dash cost him his life at a later period of the war.

"Then," said Wessels, "I will have you all dragged out and your throats cut." "Come in and try it, if you are men," was the reply of Herbert Brown, who sat on the ground wounded in the head. The men inside managed, by standing on the sandbags and some stores, to reach over with their revolvers and rifles and fired on to the Boers below, with the result that one Van Aswegen was killed and others wounded. This cleared them off, and the same night I had to evacuate both forts and get over to that in charge of Gass, narrowly escaping some Boers whose front we just had time to cross as they were coming along the road to Colley's store.

I left the men at Gass's fort, after enlarging it, and went down to the main camp at the request of Bates, to assist him. Some of the men left at Gass's were afterwards also sent for to strengthen our meagre force at the camp, as the Boers were now only 300 yards from us, at Colley's store.

I must here mention that every assistance in his

power was rendered us by Michael Colley as long as he could do so. He was an old and true friend of mine, and one I shall ever respect.

Among the trials we had to endure were the locusts (Voetvangers), "Infantry," *i.e.* young locusts that hop along in myriads. The sun was scorching hot, and as we lay in our small forts under partial cover these insects crawled over us, into our trousers legs, into our shirts—in fact, wherever there was an opening they got in. Our clothes and anything lying about were destroyed. We suffered torture, and the Boers were in even worse plight, lying flat in the open behind a few stores, barely sufficient to cover their heads, our constant fire in front, the blazing sun above, and the locusts crawling, hopping, eating, torturing (as they themselves later described it) as they at times cursed or prayed or, in sheer desperation, sprang up and rushed away, daring exposure to our fire rather than endure the unbearable torture they were submitted to. Yes, ye fat-quartered civil servants, some of ye at the head of departments now under Imperial rule, holding your positions in so many cases by the only qualification you can claim, *viz.* that of favour, who had never seen a day's active service during the last, or maybe any war, what I have mentioned are some of the minor discomforts you have missed, and which perhaps had you endured might have broadened your narrow minds, or at least have embellished them with some truth and Christian charity towards at least the South Africans who had fought so hard, endured and sacrificed so much, despite what one calling himself

an officer has said in public print, which perhaps is only worth paying attention to from the fact of the malicious ignorance displayed by the writer when he describes the Irregular Forces of South Africa as "little better than a rabble, disobedient to their officers," who in their turn "had no knowledge of their duties." This base misstatement, in as far as the mass of Colonials and their officers are concerned, is more than contradicted by the good work done by them, and with which they are credited by Lord Kitchener and many of our best British generals. But enough! perhaps I should not have wasted material on such insignificant nonentity.

## CHAPTER II

PRETTY well during the whole of the Kuruman siege I was able to get despatches away to Mafeking and Kimberley, many of which never reached their destination. In some cases the natives, acting on my instructions, destroyed the despatches when escape seemed hopeless, but too frequently they were caught and shot in cold blood. As I have before stated, I was greatly assisted by Lady Sarah Wilson, who deserves great credit for the service she rendered our corps while outside Mafeking. Many deeds of daring were done by individuals during the war, many not known, too many unrewarded.

Day after day, from daylight to dark, were the Boer bullets rained on our defences; our cattle and horses, kept alive by the aid of green reeds cut in the river near the main camp at night, and watered there also, fell daily, killed by the Boer fire. But, although we had about a third of our force hit, we lost but one white man (poor Ward of the Cape Police), killed by a random shot at dusk on a Sunday evening. He was a good man, and in charge of one of five forts surrounding the base.

Christmas Day at last came round. About ten a.m. we saw a Boer with a white flag between Colley's store and Gass's fort above us, then one of the men



from the fort met him, firing ceased, and presently we were informed that Field-Cornet Wessels had offered an armistice. We accepted, and agreed to suspend hostilities during the day, but were warned by him not to venture too much until he had conferred with the Commandant, who was camped near the Mission Station. Shortly after we got word that it was all right. Our men scattered about, revelling in the outside freedom, many went into the fruit gardens below and gathered the half-ripe fruit, meeting in many cases our enemies, only to engage in friendly banter. Some met their friends fighting on opposite sides.

I had just returned from having a bath in the Kuruman River—a luxury not to be despised after weeks without it. Messrs. Hilliard and Bates went down shortly after my return to indulge as well, and on returning when near the camp were suddenly fired on by Van der Merwe's men. Wessels did not fire, but sent word to us to let our men come down on his side; this could be done by running a short distance down the ridge below by which they were not exposed to Van der Merwe's fire. Wessels faithfully kept his word, and the following day withdrew from the attack with his Free State men, as we heard, on account of Van der Merwe's treachery.

During our siege I heard on several occasions from Vryburg. My family were at first not interfered with, but later on my sons, Alec, Harry, and Fred, with all loyal families, excepting my wife and daughter, were sent away first to Christiana, then back to Vryburg, then down south. Fred, my youngest son, managed, in company with the son of

our Congregational minister here, Rev. Olver, to escape from their guards, and got into Kimberley, narrowly escaping falling into the hands of the Boers by falling flat as the Kimberley searchlight turned towards them in its circuit just as a patrol passed about a hundred yards from them. They were arrested by our guards, but, as my son was known, were soon released. They remained and took part in the defence of the place, Fred assisting his brother-in-law, J. E. Symons, as one of the signallers on the conning tower. Far above all shelter, exposed daily to the fire of the Boer guns, including the 90-pounder, they stuck to their post without a mishap, although under constant fire. It was during the siege, the bursting of shells and constant fire of other guns and small arms, that my daughter, Mrs. Symons, gave birth to her first child; both mother and child survived. Close to Symons's house a Mrs. Solomon was killed by a shell. About this time also Labram, the maker of "Long Cecil," was killed by another shell. At the attack on Carter's Ridge, near Kimberley, my second boy, Cliff, was killed, with Major Scott Turner and many more. I cannot dwell on Kimberley siege, others more able and in a better position than myself have given the details; suffice that I write what I personally know, with a glance at times at other scenes during the war.

My wife and daughter were treated with kindness by the last Boer magistrate, P. Bodenstein, whom we had known as a boy in Rustenburg in days gone by—in fact, Bodenstein acted most nobly to those of the loyal families who remained in Vryburg.

Self-sacrifice was not wanting at Kuruman, as was shown in the case of Mrs. Harmsworth, the wife of Sergeant Harmsworth, of the Cape Police, who was also with us. She nobly remained with her husband, though a cripple, and did all she could to aid and add to the comfort of those in the defence. And it was only by dint of persuasion that she moved down to the Mission Station, and there assisted Miss E. Chapman in nursing some of our sick and wounded. It was the intention to give both these ladies some token of recognition, but circumstances prevented this being done. I will now take the opportunity of saying that what they both did was well and nobly done, and merited the sincere appreciation which was felt by one and all of us. Many noble women from the Old Country, as well as the Colonies, assisted the sick and wounded during the war, and no thanks of ours can adequately compensate them for the gentle, careful nursing many a lad experienced at their hands.

The grey dawn of morning was just tinging the east as I lighted my pipe on my morning watch (for Captain Bates and myself took half nights about duty) on the 1st January, 1900. And barely was it light enough to distinguish the fort on the ridge opposite, when I heard a distant boom. It sounded like a cannon. Relief at last, I thought, and was on the point of calling the others in the shanty we slept in, but waited for another shot to be sure. A few minutes, and again a distant cannon boom from the north-west, and as I looked out of the porthole a cannon-ball struck up the earth on the other side

of the river. No doubt about it being a cannon this time, but not of friends. I called Captain Bates and the others, who seemed to doubt at first; but scarcely had they joined me outside when we heard another shot, and saw a shell burst near Ward's fort. We all felt that the end had come, but determined to hold out as long as possible. Perhaps relief might come at last. Vain hope!

After pounding away for some time at Ward, the Boers moved their old nine-pounder round south, and then opened on us and the stable fort; the latter they could not hit, but after many attempts at us from a ridge about 3,000 yards distant, they succeeded at last in striking our embankment twice, and put one shell in an old parapet on which a goat was standing, which threw the animal up some distance, to alight on its feet straight down unhurt. The ordinary black powder was used by the Boers, so that a look-out could give fair warning, as he saw the smoke from the gun, to take cover. No one, excepting some women and children (native), seemed much put out by the Boer shelling—in fact, joking and banter was kept up all the time. After throwing shot and shell at us from daylight to three p.m., they moved their gun round east and commenced giving Gass's fort their attention, their first shells nearer hitting us than the object of their fire—in fact, about as close as the majority of shots aimed at us. At last we saw a shell burst on the fort wall, then another shortly after inside, besides which the men were exposed to a heavy Mauser fire, caused by the breach the shell had made in the wall of their fort. "There

goes the white rag," said one of our party, and sure enough something white—I believe a shirt that once was white—was hoisted by the party on the ridge. Shortly after one, Henry Thompson, a Vryburg rebel, rode up to our camp with a message from Commandant Visser demanding our surrender. After conferring together, we decided it was our only course. We had done our best, had held out for seven weeks against overwhelming odds, and longer resistance meant more loss of life. Captain Bates, Mr. Hilliard, and myself went down and met Visser at Chapman's store. The only terms we could get were that our private property would be respected; and thus, after fighting hard against fearful odds for so long we had to submit to the inevitable. Conan Doyle says in his work on the war that Kuruman was garrisoned by 130 Cape Police. He is wrong. I have given the correct number, 63 in all, fighting men, Cape Police, civilians, half-castes, and blacks. My statement can be borne out by the Rev. J. T. Brown, of Kuruman, as well as by many others not of our defence force.

What was done at Kuruman was never recognised by the authorities. We kept a considerable force engaged that might otherwise have swelled the number of the enemy elsewhere, and had the cannon not been brought to bear on us we should, in all probability, have held out another month. We had nothing but small arms.

Previous to our surrender, the Boers had used a gun, probably a Hotchkiss, that fired a small shell. On one occasion one burst in one of the portholes of

Brown's fort, and again on another occasion one struck a stone inside my fort and, bursting, wounded five of us, including myself; two of the wounded went to hospital and recovered, the remaining three, including myself, more slightly wounded, were able to continue our work of defence. Our wounded were ably attended to by the local district surgeon, Doctor Beare.

Among the commando to whom we surrendered were many men we knew of the Vryburg rebels. One, John Myburgh, was very prominent; he came galloping up to the others, waving his rifle over his head, and shouting, "Yes, I told you so; 'tis because I came to assist you." We were kept in one of the rooms of Colley's house that night, the next day, and following night, and then moved by ox-waggon to Vryburg. We were, however, treated with every kindness and consideration by our captors. Tobacco, a luxury we had been out of for some time, was freely supplied, and as they had no sugar, they sent to some of the farms on our way out and got some. I cannot commend too highly the treatment of our guards, numbering, if I rightly remember, 150 men.

On our arrival at Vryburg we were all put into the gaol. My wife and daughter came to see me there. Before we were cut off from Colley's store, and prior to the Boers taking it, I got a draft from him for £16; this I sewed in the waistband lining of my trousers, and, on giving some things to be washed to my wife, I mentioned quietly the fact about the draft, and requested her to change it for notes, placing two of five pounds in the same place. This was done,

besides which I had a few pounds in my purse, as the Boers had not robbed us of anything.

We remained at Vryburg two days, and then were taken on to Klerksdorp. On our way we passed a farm called "Rietfontein," and as we passed two carts with women drove up to our waggons from the farm. The waggons were halted, and the commandant in charge of our guard came up, and speaking to me in Dutch, said, "This is Mrs. Coetzee and her daughters. I want the officers to dismount that they may see you all." I said, "I shall not get off the waggon; if Mrs. Coetzee wants to see me, here I am; the others may do as they please." None of us got off. On this the young women commenced jeering at us, one of them saying, "Wait until you get to Pretoria into Kruger's hands; he will treat you all as you deserve." "You dirt!" "You dogs!" and such epithets were freely cast at us. I stood on the front of the waggon for some time, looking at them; then said, "And so this is the language of a people who call themselves Christians." "Hark!" said one of the girls, pointing at me, "he talks of Christianity; what can such heathen know about it?" At which they all burst out laughing. Our men on an open waggon in front on this gave a cheer, and some of them jumped off the waggon and started plaguing the girls, who at first seemed to resent, but soon to appreciate the attention paid them. They shortly drove back to their farm amid cheers from the men. The action of Willie Dunbar and others in chaffing the girls had sent them away in a good humour and completely changed the current of feeling.

I noticed that they were all dressed in black, and, on inquiry, found that the father, two sons, and son-in-law had all been killed at Mud River. The Boers did not lose by any means as many men as we did, but they lost heavily nevertheless, as was proved by the fact of few families in the Transvaal who had not lost one or more relatives.

"One killed and two wounded" became the set rule of number of their casualties, whereas the number of killed on our side were multiplied by any number. They are not a particularly truthful people, and truth is only used when it might be beneficial to the party using it. The South African Boer has many good traits in his character, but he is, as a rule, untruthful to a degree; it is, I am sorry to say, a national failing. "Jy lieg" (you lie) is no insult to a Boer, and the expression is commonly used by them one towards the other.

We arrived at Klerksdorp and were again placed in the common gaol for the night, and the next morning entrained for Pretoria, where we arrived in the afternoon of the same day.

Immediately on our arrival we were ordered to get off, and were kept standing for fully two hours, then marched off (all excepting the magistrate, Mr. Hilliard, who was taken to the Model School prison) to "the Transvaal Hotel," as the Hollander officer who gave the order called it. He meant the common gaol, and to the gaol we were taken, there arranged in a row, searched, everything of any value taken from us, including our pocket-knives, then all marched to the Reformers' quarters—an iron building in the



prison yard. This was the room occupied by the Johannesburg men after the capture of Jameson's party. Shortly after, on walking across the yard, I met face to face a stout man whose face I recognised but whose name I could not find in my unfaithful memory for names. We shook hands. "Who are you?" I asked. "I will not tell you," he replied. "You must find out. You know me well." "In what capacity are you here?" I inquired. "I am gaoler of this prison," he replied. "Oh! are you," I said, "and is it your custom to crowd men and officers into one room?" "No. How many officers are you?" he queried. "Two," I answered, "Captain Bates and myself." "Well," said he, "you see those two men standing in the doorway of those rooms there" (pointing to the opposite side of the yard); "they are two officers. There are two rooms, 'Jameson's rooms.' Go there, and I will cause your blankets to be taken to the rooms at once." I called Bates, and we went together. The two officers were Captain Kirkwood and Lieutenant Tarbut of the South African Light Horse, who were taken prisoners at Colenso and Nicholson's Nek, the latter-named at Nicholson's Nek. After chatting awhile, I asked who the gaoler was. "Du Plessis is his name," replied Captain Kirkwood. And so it was a man, Jacobus du Plessis, whom I had known in Burghersdorp as a youth in 1860, and later in Rustenburg. The same man served with me in 1879 with Sir Garnet Wolseley's column against Secocoeni.

We were pleased, as can be imagined, to get into

comfortable quarters and to find such congenial companions. Poor Tarbut took ill later, was removed to the hospital, and died there of enteric fever.

The first few days passed pleasantly away as we killed time by recounting to one another our experiences of the war, but as time dragged on, prison life became monotonous, even reading became tiring to my restless spirit. The monotony was often broken, as batches of fresh prisoners were brought in, in seeing them searched and watching their faces and actions when their first ration of mealie meal porridge was given them. The hungry would generally eat it, or at any rate a portion of it, but, as a rule, smell it, turn it over in the round tin bowls, then put it down in disgust.

Kirkwood suggested marbles, and sent for some, but after an hour at a game we had to give it up, concluding that the game was no good, and this we realised more the next day, as we both were almost too stiff in our joints to walk.

The game of "patience" with cards was the most popular pastime in gaol, and certainly suited our environment better than marbles.

During the day we were only allowed to make use of a space within chalked lines enclosing an area of about thirty feet square, but after the cells were locked at night greater freedom was given us. We could walk all about the yard, which was a great boon, more especially as this gave us an opportunity, from the corner of the prison yard, of seeing the hills outside; and on one occasion I was allowed, by special permission of the President, whom I had

known in former years, two hours on parole to enable me to visit my sister, who lived in Pretoria, and who was ill. No one but those who have suffered prison life can realise this great boon, to be able to wander about free, even for a limited time, and breathe purer air.

After all, there were many worse off than we were, for the treatment was by no means unkind. We were allowed to make use of the money that had been taken from us, by giving orders, through the warders, for necessaries, which were booked against the amounts held in trust for us by the prison clerk. Then, besides, friends supplied us with food and reading matter—in fact, the kindness experienced by us from the Pretorian friends deserved our sincerest appreciation and gratitude. And in these lines I would convey to them the fact that we valued their kindness greatly. How can I forget the kind consideration of the American Consul, Mr. Hayes? He proved himself (excuse the phrase) “a white man.”

We were not without news from the outer world either, for the local papers, which were not allowed to any prisoners by the prison rules, were frequently brought us secretly by one or other of the native (Zulu) constables at their own cost. One of the warders, Jarvis by name, had been an N.C.O. in the Border Horse under me; in 1879 he rendered me great assistance in getting despatches out. Frequently men were arrested on suspicion in the town, placed in prison, and later sent down to Delagoa Bay as “undesirables.” Jarvis would give me this information, as well as more useful intelligence. Then

at our Sunday service I would manage to pass a letter on to one or other of those about being sent away, to be posted at a British port to the Chief Intelligence Officer, Cape Town. Letters from home came frequently to hand, *via* Delagoa, of course after having passed the censor. Thus I had news of the welfare of my family from time to time, as did my fellow-prisoners from theirs.

The newspapers, teeming with news of the disasters of our troops—fairly truthful accounts at times, as we found out later—were read aloud by one or other of us, while one stood near the window on guard against intrusion. On the approach of anyone the paper was hastily hidden beneath the mattress. Copies of State wires not infrequently came into our possession by the aid of two war prisoners in the cell adjoining us, who got them through a trusty native constable. How they were obtained I do not know, but can fairly guess. These wires were tied to a stone and thrown through the window-bars at night to our friends by the constable, and eagerly were these wires awaited and the contents devoured by us.

The story of the "Man with the dog" at the Model School prison, where the officers were first kept, has appeared in print before, but I will recount it again.

A man with a dog was frequently seen by the officers in prison at the Model School, whose actions seemed peculiar. He would walk slowly past the prison windows, suddenly halt and talk to the dog, who would wag his tail knowingly. He was thought by the prisoners to be mad, but by degrees it dawned

upon them that the man was trying to attract their attention. This was conclusively proved to be the case at last. He would, for instance, say to the dog, "Lady relieved, eh! old dog?" and so on. The dog, of course, always wagged his tail as if in assent. By this means much information was conveyed to the eager prisoners of war inside. Then, again, by means of signalling from a friendly dwelling opposite, in which some young ladies lent their aid. As I have not the permission of those, who aided our officers so much, to give their names, I shall refrain from doing so in these pages. Suffice it to say, they were rewarded for their self-sacrificing work.

### CHAPTER III

ABOUT two months after our arrival in the Pretoria prison, Captains Kirkwood and Bates were removed to the officers' prison. I was left alone. "Why is this?" I asked the gaoler. "Because," he replied, "they say you were formerly a burgher of this State." True I had, in the days when I lived in the Transvaal, been a burgher until the annexation by the British. Then, during the armistice of 1881, I left the country, and, although a burgher, I never was other than loyal to the flag of England.

After remaining in the rooms alone for a few days, I asked the gaoler to give me a companion. He asked me whom I would like. I said Cray Nourse. He sent for Mr. Nourse and asked him if he would like to join me; he assented and became my companion the same day. Nourse had been taken prisoner near Colenso, had served on one of the Intelligence Staffs of our troops, and was in a room on the opposite side of the yard to us.

One day, while we were sitting at table together, I said, "Nourse, I am going to try what I can do to get out of this to the officers' quarters, by writing to the Attorney General that, as I am now so comfortable here, I hope they will not remove me, but allow us to remain together here." "And what good

will that do you?" he asked. "It can do me no harm," I replied, "but, as these people seem to have a happy way of doing the opposite of what is asked of them sometimes, they may decide not to grant my request." I wrote the letter, and the next day the gaoler sent for me and gave it to me back, with the reply from the Attorney General on the corner, containing briefly the words, "The request cannot be complied with." I had got what I wanted, had beaten the wily limb of the law at his own game. I was satisfied.

I have forgotten to mention that two prisoners of war in the same cell adjoining our rooms, later occupied by the men who got the copies of State wires I have mentioned, made up their minds to try and effect their escape by cutting a hole in the iron of their roof. We assisted them with a tin-opener and again other on the first breaking, and night after night could we hear the grating sound of their cutting. After many nights of arduous work they at last got on to the roof, only to be seen by the guard at the back gate who gave the alarm. They were caught, locked up in the murderers' cell, next day tried and condemned to six months' hard labour. Daily afterwards did we see them in ordinary convict's garb paraded and marched out with criminals to work. Hard justice, we thought, for trying to do their duty.

A day or two after receiving the communication from the Attorney ~~re~~ my request, the acting gaoler, Van der Walt, came to our rooms and said that a policeman was waiting to take me over to the officers' prison. "But," said he, "if you will pay for a cab I

will drive you over," to which I willingly agreed. We drove over about eleven a.m., and at the gate of the compound of treble barbed wire fence a crowd of officers was standing, among whom I recognised Kirkwood and Hilliard. An eager crowd at once surrounded me for news, but only to be disappointed when they heard I was only a gaolbird, a prisoner like themselves. Here I cannot do better than give an extract from my diary, which may prove of some interest to the readers of this scanty history of my personal experiences of the war, to which could be added many more details. Much I could write, and too much perhaps that would not reflect credit on some of our Imperial officers, or on the management, or want of it, of some of the campaigns I served in. May England's experience of the last few years be the means of adding lustre to her fame, by weeding out incapacity and supplanting it by ability and experience. She has an unlimited supply of it obtainable by the burial of false pride, and by the aid of ordinary common sense, making use of experienced practical men as officers, and doing away with favouritism, that is so much the curse of the civil as well as the military department.

I give the following extract from the autobiography of William Amslie, one of the earlier settlers of the Cape Colony, showing that in the past things were mismanaged in the same way as of late years. England's rulers in this country sacrificed those who fought hardest and suffered most to benefit the stranger, men wanting in the experience required of the subjects they have to deal with. He



says, referring to the granting of the land after the Kaffir War of 1851-2: "We, who had acted as buffers to the hordes in Waterkloof, thought we were sure of getting in first, but we were woefully disappointed. Men who had never smelt gunpowder were appointed to consider claims. Men who were strangers to the position and all that had taken place," etc. And this was after much valuable service rendered, much loss, sacrifice and wounds endured by the brave borderers. And this was but one of the many acts of injustice suffered by our forefathers at the hands of the autocratic and incapable rulers of the earlier days of the Cape Colony.

## CHAPTER IV

THE following are extracts from my diary while in prison, dating previous to my arrival in officers' quarters:—

1900, *April 23rd, Monday*.—Kirkwood and Bates, besides about twenty-six others, were removed to-day; the former to the officers' quarters. Three men, by names of Turner, York, and E. Ferreira, were put outside the prison gate and simply told to go; the other men were sent to Waterval. Informed to-day that a number of Irish-Americans, who came out ostensibly for ambulance work, were relieved of the red cross and armed in front of the President's house, after having been addressed by him. Received parcel of books and set of chess-men with board from Transvaal Masonic Lodge; a welcome boon.

24th, *Tuesday*.—My first whole day alone, but I did not mind the solitude of my prison room; it seemed to suit me. I passed the day in writing, reading, and sauntering about within my limited area. Got information *re* explosion of Begbie Iron Foundry at Johannesburg; loss of life reported, 133 killed, 58 in hospital wounded.

25th, *Wednesday*.—Went to see gaolor; asked for permission to have a companion at times for a game of chess. "Would you not like to have Nourse to

live with you?" he asked. "I shall be very glad indeed if you will allow it," I replied. Calling to Sergeant Van Tonder (one of his assistants), he said, "Tell Nourse to come here." Mr. Nourse shortly arrived, and agreed to the proposal.

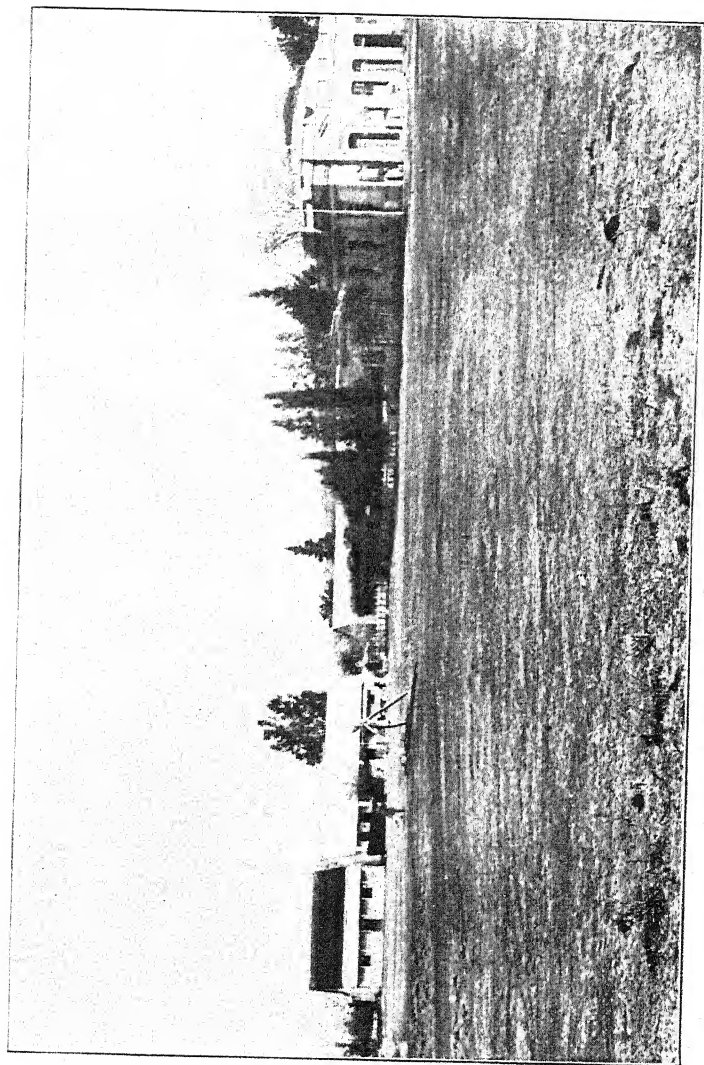
*26th, Thursday.*—My sister, Mrs. W. A. Tennant, with her three boys came to see me to-day—a pleasure I always look forward to. No men are allowed to visit me.

*27th, Friday.*—Peach, one of my old Border Horse troopers, arrived in gaol to-day; was taken near Barkly West in Cape Colony. Was glad to meet him.

*28th, Saturday.*—Reported all English to be sent over the border. Too good to be true.

*29th.*—This is Sunday, and I have now been in prison 104 days. What those days have been can only be realised by those who, like myself, have had to pass away the weary, monotonous time, each day like the other, varied a little by the stolen news from the outside world, rumours of successes and failures of our arms (too often the latter). Rev. Batts, Baptist minister of Pretoria, preached again to-day. This gentleman is much respected by us all. Owing to his exertions, the prisoners of war have been for the last month getting meals from an outside source, and are looking much better in consequence. Rumours to-day that Boers have been driven from Wepener and three other positions; that foreign corps has been cut up. Boers also driven from Fourteen Streams, on the Vaal River.

*30th, Monday.*—Piet Grobblaar (one of the warders)



VIEW OF RUSTENBURG COURT HOUSE



informs me that he has to get one of the native youths from Kuruman promised him by the gaoler. These boys, about thirteen in number, brought up by us from Kuruman, and who were some of our water-carriers to the outposts at night at Kuruman during the siege, have nearly all been given out to work as servants in the town. My niece, Mrs. Cooper, came to see me, brought some magazines and a cake. Rumoured that British have occupied Winburg. Dr. Newman, about thirty natives, and one white man arrived in prison to-day. Both Nourse and myself were struck with the fact that things were very quiet at the railway station this evening. Hear all British subjects are to leave Transvaal towns within thirty-six hours, excepting such as get special permission to remain.

*May 1st, Tuesday.*—Hear Boer forces retired from Wepener, and that severe engagements had taken place east of Bloemfontein. P. Grobblaar (warder) informed me this morning that no more milk will be supplied in future. Presume gaoler's daughter does not care to supply one bottle per diem, which is all we now require. This woman has done well out of the prisoners of war by selling milk at sixpence per bottle. Received a letter from Alec (my late eldest son), dated 30/2/00, giving account of poor Cliff's death (my second son, who fell at Carter's Ridge, siege of Kimberley).

*2nd, Wednesday.*—Rumours early this morning that British have taken Winburg, Boers have taken 400 prisoners, and that De Wet has been surrounded for several days. The day commences well! Letters

from home (Vryburg) state fever very bad in Vryburg and district. Numbers, both black and white, stated to be dying; that provisions are becoming very scarce. Am feeling anxious about my family at Vryburg. More men left for the front last night, among them the gaoler's two sons, Snyman and Abraham (surnamed Lord Nelson) and Pretorius, all warders but the gaoler's sons. Rumoured that Boers are tired of war, and that we may have peace within a month! Had a shower-bath to-day at Reformers'-room, an improvement on the bucket-bath, and a luxury indeed.

*3rd, Thursday.*—The day commenced with the usual gaol rumours, but, on the principle that "there cannot be smoke without fire," we are sanguine. The rumour is that the Boers were cut up by 1,000 cavalry (Lancers and others) near De Wet's Dorp; that Fourteen Streams Bridge is repaired; that Boers are being generally smashed up, and great discontent prevails in Boer camps. Went over to Reformers' house for a bath; had a chat with Mr. van der Spuy, late manager National Bank, Zeerust, who was imprisoned under pretext of not having reported himself within the prescribed time. This gentleman, though a Dutch Africander by birth, was ever loyal to the British flag, and was a British subject of the Cape Colony. One of the native prisoners placed in the stocks this morning for receiving a piece of bread from a white prisoner. Over 100 British subjects said to have left Pretoria yesterday, as per proclamation of the President bearing date the 30th April, 1900, framed on the supposition that British subjects

had to do with the explosion of the Begbie factory at Johannesburg. Heard of Lord Roberts' notice to Republican Government *re* treatment of prisoners of war. *Volkstem* leader denies that any prisoners of war are kept in gaol here. As a direct contradiction, we are at present in gaol: Nourse, Natal Scouts; Ferreira, Cape Police; Hildane, Cape Police; Hanson, Cape Police; and myself.

*4th, Friday.*—Morning rumours: That President Steyn is moving; that Boers are making preparations to fall back here. Considerable commotion during last night at railway station, waggons and carts going to and fro, evidently the removal of valuables. The gaoler most friendly, had a long chat with him during the afternoon to-day; quite a new departure, as he has been most distant and surly lately. He said, "I am going to the front to-day, and if I am made a prisoner you must put in a word for me." I said, "Yes, I will give you a card." He came again in the evening and had a long chat with us. I gave him a few lines recommending him to the mercy of our troops, in case he became a prisoner; for, on the whole, we had been well treated by him. Sergeant Van Tonder also came in and sat down to chat with us for the first time. What does this mean? We guess, but do not know. Perhaps some of the rumours are true. Perhaps De Wet has been captured and Leibenburg cut up. Had a message on the quiet from an old friend, Dr. Flynn, of early Rustenburg days, but he is not allowed to see me.

*5th, Saturday.*—Usual rumours. Troops at Brand-



fort, general advance stated. Thus we believe that Lord Roberts is advancing, but how slow it seems to us pent up in prison! Over 400 British subjects have been sent from Johannesburg and Pretoria across the border, we hear. We also hear that Roberts is advancing rapidly this afternoon. Shall we see the old Union Jack hoisted here on that day? We hope so. Oh! it is hard to be a prisoner and helpless while others are fighting for the dear old flag!

6th, Sunday.—Authentic rumours this morning as follows: Brandfort in hands of English, Boers retreating in all directions. Our troops crossed Fourteen Streams. Troops, *vid* Beira, near Mafeking. Irish Brigade at Brandfort all killed or taken prisoners. Extract *Volkstem*, Pretoria, May 5th, 11.30 a.m. "According to report Brandfort came into possession of British on Thursday, the 3rd instant, at one o'clock; there was little opposition on our side, the enemy's forces were too numerous; our men retired in good order. *We had one killed and seventeen wounded.*" The news to-day is most gratifying and leads us to think that the end is not far off.

Sunday afternoon.—All very quiet, the air balmy and refreshing; everything in prison seems peaceful and serene, and one can hardly realise that not far from us strife, bloody strife, is raging.

7th, Monday.—Gaoler informs me that he has got me permission to visit my sister, who is ill. Good news! I go for two hours to-morrow. An old Bushman died in prison to-day, one of the Kuruman prisoners, believed to be the man who shot a Cape

Police sergeant near Langeberg about the outbreak of the war.

8th, *Tuesday*.—This has been a red-letter day for me, for I have been granted two hours' parole, to visit my sister. Never were two hours more happily spent, never more valued. I shall ever feel grateful to President Kruger, for it is to him I owe this favour. Poor old Paul, there are many worse than you, and with all your faults it is perhaps just doubtful that Imperial rule will better yours. Various and contradictory rumours as usual regarding the war.

9th, *Wednesday*.—Rumoured that the Boers are retiring on Vereeniging. As they retire so our hopes are raised for release. May it be on the 24th! This evening the gaoler leaves for the front with his son Jan du Plessis, as also warders Harn, Hennings, and Hattingh. Du Plessis, the gaoler, again came to bid us good-bye; he has so often been going that we doubt him; his son came, as also a younger brother, about eleven or twelve years, whom I asked if he too were going to fight. He said, "No, but I wish I was." And such are the children of the patriotic republic. This fact calls to my mind the war of 1881, when boys ran away from home to join their friends on commando. No news from home lately; am anxious. If I knew that those at home were safe, then imprisonment would be easier to bear.

10th, *Thursday*.—This morning private note from outside states: "All going well. Fourteen Streams in our hands. Boers have taken up position about six miles from Christiana. Others are scouting in all directions. A column *en route* to relieve Mafeking.

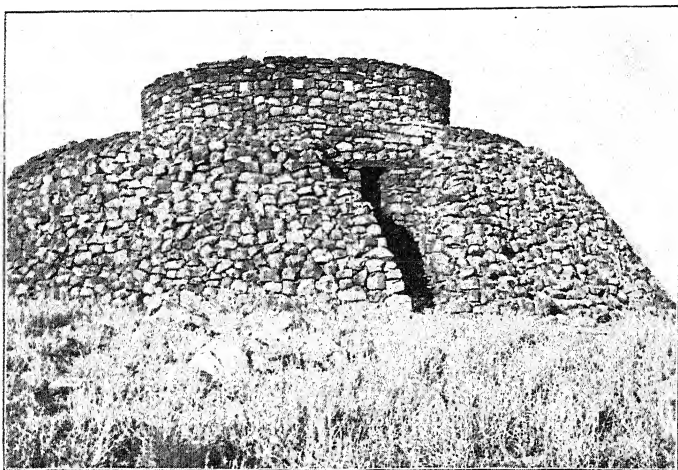
Troops, *viâ* Beira, are arriving at a station near Mafeking; expected latter place will be relieved in a few days. British moving on rapidly towards Kroonstad. Boers are now finding pressing duties at their homes calling them back. No stand will be made at Pretoria by Boer armies. Roberts wired to Cape Town on the 3rd to provide accommodation for about 4,000 prisoners. Suppose that General De Wet and his commando are the prisoners referred to. Preparations are being made to move seat of Government from Pretoria to some place north-east, probably Lydenburg."

Since getting the foregoing, a number of prisoners have been removed from the gaol here to Barberton.

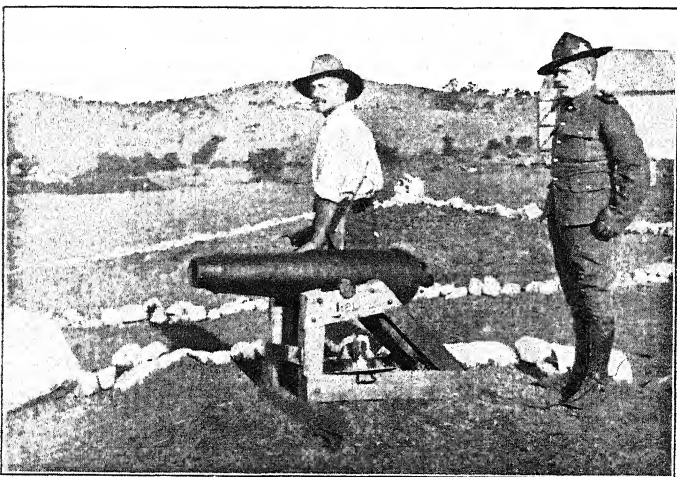
One of the sergeants of the gaol (Van der Walt) has refused to go to the front with the gaoler. He, like many others, knows the game is up, and will be satisfied to live under the British flag.

I often spoke to the sergeant and pointed out the folly of the struggle, and that they (the people) were being misled by the rulers, guided by a fanatical President, whose constant biblical quotations greatly influenced the simple Boer. I feel sorry for the people, brave but misled men. Patriotism, or fanaticism, has reached the zenith, for women are now offering their services to do battle for the States, *vide Volkstem* of the 8th inst.

11th, Friday.—This morning I was told that I was to be moved to the officers' quarters. I had written asking to be allowed to remain here, and this is the result. I packed my few articles, and, in company with Sergeant Van Tonder, left my prison abode of



A GARRISON FORT ON THE RUSTENBURG HEIGHTS



THIS OLD GUN WAS USED AGAINST THE BRITISH FORT  
AT RUSTENBURG IN 1881



nearly four months. Van Tonder was most kind. He got a cab and saved me a walk to my new quarters. After a few minutes' drive we arrived at the "Bird Cage" (name given to the officers' prison quarters). I was met by a crowd at the gate to hear the news. Among others, I met Kirkwood and Bates (my former fellow-prisoners) and Hilliard of Kuruman, the only ones I knew at the time. Later on I met others, among whom was Pat Hockley, one of our best Colonial boys, who had been captured at Magersfontein; was one of our corps of scouts. Colonel Hunt was senior officer of about 140 all told in this prison abode. The prison building stands in the centre of an enclosure of about 200 yards square, fenced by three lines of barbed wire interlaced, and is of iron and wood and about 315 feet long, in which are the sleeping apartments, one long dormitory, and a large messroom; good bathrooms outside and other accommodation; all lighted outside and in by electric light. The guards here are all Hollanders, are polite and obliging. I met also the Rev. A. Hoffman, whom I knew at Mafeking. He was taken at Lobatsi, while on his way to Lake N'gami with his family. His all was confiscated and himself imprisoned. Met the United States Consul, Mr. Hayes, to-day; he was most kind to me, and very popular with all."

*12th, Saturday.*—I found my new quarters much colder than the old, but slept well. Shortly after breakfast two more officers arrived, taken at Ventersburg Road.

Another blunder! Two and a half squadrons

of men—Australians and Scots Greys—were ordered to take a kopje right in centre of Boer position. Result: a number killed, and twelve taken prisoners. Blunder after blunder! Met Hawkins, brother-in-law of Goodchild, of Vryburg, who was taken prisoner at Sanna's Post, where our people rode into a trap. Another blunder! No scouts out! Whole thing managed here by a committee at a cost of about 4s. per diem; and, in fact, one can hardly realise this as prison life compared to the gaol.

Extract from *Volkstem* of 12th May shows to what length the leaders will go to mislead the ignorant Boer. Commences: "From Landrost Schweizerenecke to State President, 11.5.1900. It has been reported to me to-day by burghers in Bechuanaland that the behaviour of the British troops is terrible, and that the destruction of property is wholesale. Sick persons are being driven out into the veld, and their homes and furniture burnt; cattle, everything is destroyed, nothing is left. To such lengths have these barbarities been carried that a newly buried body has been exhumed and thrown upon the veld."

13th, Sunday.—Reported that Mafeking had been taken by the Boers. We do not believe this. *Volkstem* of the 12th states that Mafeking was being again attacked and that the native town was burnt. I think possibly that portion of the town situate on the east of the river. We are anxiously awaiting further news. Our sincere hope is that Baden-Powell may hold out to the end. All Dutch letters generally tend to show that the Boers are sick of fighting, and

the tone of the leading articles in the local papers also indicates the general feeling in that respect.

14th, *Monday*.—This morning we hear that heavy fighting had taken place at Mafeking, that Boers had lost 140 killed; later, that all were captured but three. I doubt the details of the rumours, but believe the Boers have had a reverse, and conclude it was inflicted on them by the relief column, whom, according to the *Volkstem*, they had gone to meet. All of us are eager and anxious for information, and, as can be well understood, men in our position grasp at straws.

Here I may mention that, besides the daily papers (local) which in these officers' quarters are allowed us, we get a deal of information from the baker's boy, who brings in everything with the bread cart. Two of us, as a rule, meet the cart at the kitchen door, and one—usually myself speaking Dutch—keeps the guard engaged in conversation while the other pumps the baker's boy, who, being an English-Colonial lad, gives us all he can and gleans all he can for us.

Our meals would be most amusing to a spectator, for everyone is free to make as much noise in talking as he likes. All—like a group of ladies at a tea party—talk at once. Not being an adept at doing three things at once—viz. eating, talking, and listening—I am rather out of the game; but all seem happy, so what does it matter?

15th, *Tuesday*.—I am getting to like the life here more and more. So much freedom, so many to talk to and interchange ideas with, so many accounts of the



different battles fought, so much criticism, so much to criticise, time passes pleasantly and quickly by ; so different to the cruel monotony of gaol life. Nothing particular to-day.

16th, *Wednesday*.—Rumoured that we have had a big reverse ; was told this by the assistant commandant of our prison guard, but do not believe it, as the man is very bitter against the English, and the only one of our guards we do not care for. Further rumours, that the Boers are flying from Helpmakaar. Yesterday's paper states that Kraaipan Bridge is being repaired by our forces. We thus believe that Mafeking is relieved.

17th and 18th, *Thursday and Friday*.—Nothing of any importance *re* the war, but received some home letters, which were a boon. One letter from my daughter in Kimberley giving details of Carter's Ridge engagement, where my son Cliff fell, with his commanding officer, Major Scott Turner, of the 42nd, and many of his comrades. This war is costing us too much.

19th, *Saturday*.—Articles in the *Volkstem* referring to Lord Roberts, evidently untrue, mentioning atrocities committed by his order, etc., etc., in the Orange Free State.

20th, *Sunday*.—Rumoured that the public of Pretoria expect peace in five days' time. We hope so. We still look forward to our release on the 24th inst. Rev. Batts, Baptist minister, preached for us to-day. His text was from Proverbs : "Good news likened to cold water to a thirsty soul." A most suggestive sermon, out of which we learnt much.

The preacher's last words were, "The hindrances are all removed." We knew now that relief was not far off. Lieutenant Everton, P.A.G., gave me the story of his capture to-day. He says: "I was out buying forage, etc., from Kroonstad, with six men, including my servant. We had gone to several farmhouses, when on nearing one about ten miles out, *on which a white flag was hoisted*, we rode boldly up to it. Suddenly a number of guns were pointed at us from round the gable end of the house, and a voice called out, 'Hands up!' followed by a volley. Three of my men fell, one killed and two wounded. One man escaped, myself with the other two were captured. The *Volkstem* does not publish such acts as these. D. Theron was the man in charge of the enemy's party."

21st, Monday.—Heard to-day again that we are to be removed. I doubt it.

22nd, Tuesday.—*Volkstem* of yesterday is changing its tone as the Government mouthpiece; now states *facts in re* British treatment; prints a statement from Lichtenburg, dated May 19th, which states that "the accounts of British brutality in Stellaland have been much exaggerated, and that families in want have been fed." This, to my mind, is another little bit of our usual Boer leader slimness. They find it best, at the present juncture, to contradict themselves, to colour the minds of their followers by publishing ostensibly the contradiction of a lie. It meets their ends to tell the truth now. "Do not fear; the English are not monsters, your families are cared for." We hear Buller is advancing, that he is in possession of

Laing's Nek, and that our forces from the west are near Rustenburg.

We murmur as we hear of delay of Roberts at Kroonstad, and, from our point of view, it seems suicidal not to push on after a flying foe, to whom delay gives the opportunity of reorganising. But we must not judge, for we do not know the circumstances of such delay. Pleased are we all to see by the paper this evening that the train is now running to Mafeking and Bulawayo. Our people deserve credit for pushing on at last on the western border; there seems to have been some thoroughness in the carrying out of matters on the western side. Same paper gives account of defeat of a small body of our men on the eastern side, and the capture of thirteen of our men and forty killed. The usual "one killed and two wounded" on the Boer side.

*23rd, Wednesday.*—Nothing particular to-day. Wild talk about distant gun-firing south-east, which I think our keen-eared boys, had they carefully investigated, would have found to proceed from the knocking on our iron building by a mischievous somebody, I believe one or other of our soldier servants, who had also at different times been the cause of the captive monkey's release from his pole, and escapades on the iron roof in the morning, dragging his chain across the iron, much to the annoyance of the lazy members of our prison house. "Tommy" found it an excellent way to make an early clearance, so as to enable them to commence the daily making-up of our dormitory.

*24th, Thursday.*—No signs of the relieving column

yet, and this is our Queen's birthday, the day we looked forward to. But the day is only commencing.

The dinner-bell sounded for an unusually early gathering, when it was decided to send a congratulatory message to Her Majesty from all the *prisoners* in this cage. Some opposition had been made regarding the civilians in our midst, who should not be included, but this was overruled. I felt rather sorry for the *little* men who ventured to give vent to their little ideas. I had begun to think that the education of the British in England had raised them above the once proverbial, and to us Colonials, disgusting littleness of those who claim to belong to the greatest nation on earth.

*25th, Friday.*—Usual routine of rumours: Potchefstroom in our hands, etc., etc. Another prisoner in this evening, an officer of Lumsden's Horse, from hospital. He was taken at Brandfort wounded. Drawing to-day for our prison newspaper, called *The Gram*, inaugurated by Lord Rosslyn and others, and most cleverly got up. I was among the unsuccessful drawers. Hilliard, Bates, and Kirkwood were among the lucky men.

*26th, Saturday.*—Two more officers arrived to-day, taken at Lindley, O.F.S. They state that Lord Roberts has 120,000 men with him, and is sweeping all before him.

*27th, Sunday.*—Rev. —, Wesleyan minister, preached for us to-day. I asked how it was that no Episcopalian minister performed, and was told that the local parson, who used to officiate at the Model School prison, prior to the removal to the "Bird

Cage," refused to conduct services after the escape from prison of Winston Churchill and others. Wasn't he a caution? I reckon he'd take Cape Owl's cake, that parson. Couldn't have been a big man, eh? *Chucked a chest*, they say, once, but *got the hump* later. Guns distinctly heard this afternoon in the direction of Krugersdorp. All looking forward to speedy release. All hands excited.

28th, Monday.—Another officer to-day, Webber by name, of the R.E., taken at Heilbron. Rumoured to-day that our troops have crossed the Vaal. Boers are holding a place called "Eagle's Nest," seven miles south of Johannesburg. That we are to be moved to Pietersburg. Cannonading heard in direction of Johannesburg and Krugersdorp.

29th, Tuesday.—Hear this morning that Mafeking column is two miles from Johannesburg. Another that the column is in possession. Guns distinctly heard again in the direction of Johannesburg. No further news *re* our removal as yet. Our guards have been strengthened. Twelve o'clock, rumoured that our forces are at Krugersdorp, One p.m., that we are in possession of Johannesburg. Heavy guns firing all the afternoon in the direction of Krugersdorp. All very jovial to-night. Hear to-night that men at Waterfall refused to be moved to Middleburg. Colonel Hunt was approached during the evening and told that the men's refusal might result in bloodshed. His reply was: "If such does occur your Government will have themselves to blame for what the other soldiers may do in avenging their comrades. The officers here will not do anything to aid in the

removal of the troops, and, if I am allowed to suggest, I will say that if you will allow of some of the officers going out to speak to the men, and that no removal of prisoners is attempted, the officers would guarantee their conduct.

While at dinner Colonel Hunt was called out, and shortly returned with Mr. Leigh Wood, manager of the Standard Bank, Pretoria, who took his place with us. Shortly after the United States Consul, Mr. Hayes, also joined us. This unusual event was most cheering; all said that something important had happened. The commandant of our prison came in and told us it was believed our troops would be here to-morrow, and hoped that, as we had got on so well together hitherto, we as soldiers would remember that he still had his duty to perform. "He's a jolly good fellow," followed the commandant's remarks. Colonel Hunt said there were two gentlemen present who had done much for us quietly, namely, Mr. Leigh Wood and Mr. Hayes, the United States Consul. The proverbial song was repeated, followed by "God save the Queen," sung as I had seldom before or since heard it sung; it was truly meant. We hear that Generals French and Hamilton have forced through with a large cavalry force and were this afternoon twenty-four miles from here, and in possession of the railway line to Johannesburg. That we are in possession of the Krugersdorp line also.

Several officers (at the request of the President, with a promise that no prisoner should be moved), including Kirkwood, Major Murray, Burrowes,

Spencer, Gray, Lord Rosslyn, and others went to Waterfall to aid in quieting the troops and prisoners there. All excitement this evening, and little sleep will there be to-night.

30th, *Wednesday*.—All dressed in their best this morning. All who could raise any uniform at all were dressed in it to meet the long-expected relief. Heavy cannon-firing commenced in the early morning, and our gaze was towards the south from whence the advancing forces were expected to enter the capital. The morning and noon passed, but still no signs of the expected columns. About three p.m. another prisoner, an Australian officer, was brought in. He had been captured riding into Johannesburg on Monday last. States he witnessed a fight in rear of the train which brought him in, and that the Boers were flying in all directions. Hundreds tried to mount the train, but could not; many were pulled off by their comrades by the legs. That they intend making a last stand about six miles south of this. That the Burgomaster of Pretoria told him he was prepared to hand over the town at once. That Lord Roberts' programme was to enter Johannesburg on Tuesday, and Pretoria on Thursday, so that we have another night at least in our prison quarters. Another long night! How long these last nights and days seem to us! *Volkstem* says that Bloemfontein is retaken, that De Wet is busy reorganising in Free State; the usual routine of lying inventions. And as a fact we hear that the President has fled and taken £2,500,000 with him in bullion.

31st, *Thursday*.—Everyone rose this morning early



in anxious expectation, but no signs of the relief column yet. Much excitement apparent in town. Natives and Boers flying. Two miserable objects (Boers) turned up on foot out of some bush near our prison, with their guns and blankets. They were taken to the commandant of our guard, fed, and, accompanied by one of the guards, went into the town to hand in their rifles, it was said. Rumoured that train communication with Johannesburg was resumed. Several trains going north on the Pietersburg line. About 150 Boers passed our compound; one said in English, "Your friends are close by." Later, about 400 mounted Boers came from the west, halted for a time near the town, then went off through Dasport to the north. The first lot were recalled and sent back to Irene station, where the leaders intend making a stand. Two officers and men brought in to-day, captured at Elandsfontein. Looting of Government stores to-day in the town, populace enraged at the action of Kruger and his satellites in taking away all the bullion and leaving useless notes to pay their hirelings and officials with. Great excitement, we hear, prevails in consequence. Boers are burning the veld all round the town; object, to make the place as useless for stock as possible. Hear that four Polish Jews were shot to-day by the police while looting stores. Several shots were heard by us in town.

*June 1st, Friday.*—Lord Rosslyn, who had been let out of prison, returned to-day, and states that it is rumoured that 700 of General French's men were captured and let go on parole, and that another Jew



had been shot while looting ; he tried to defend himself with a revolver. We hear that the Boers are gathering in strong force at Irene station. A number of mounted Boers passed through to-day, about 300 or 400, with several mule waggons loaded with footmen, all trekking north. We all received a bonus to-day of £25 each from some good Samaritan or Samaritans. God bless them, for many of us want the means of buying necessities.

*2nd, Saturday.*—Rumoured that our forces are at Modderfontein, fifteen miles from here, south. That Baden-Powell is at the Crocodile, fifteen miles north-west. That our forces have had a knock-out at Senekal in the O.F.S.

A Boer commando of several hundreds is reported to be off-saddled about three miles west of town. Numbers are passing through to Six Mile Spruit, south of the town. Botha said to have about 1,500 men there. The final battles may be fought there. I am, and we are all, eager to get out and join in the finale.

*3rd, Sunday.*—Boers on south of town have moved a waggon, and a few horsemen only seen moving. Service to-day by the Rev. Godwin, Methodist. Hymn sung daily at Westminster sung here again to-day. Boers still passing through in the direction of Irene.

*4th, Monday.*—This morning all was quiet until about midday, when the booming of cannon was distinctly heard in the south, and continues as I am writing now, about three p.m. Shells and shrapnel can be plainly seen bursting on the ridge and forts

south, south-west, and south-east of the town. Some have burst on the outskirts of the town, with what result we cannot tell. Heavy firing in the distance can be heard extending over miles south of the town. A balloon was twice visible to our eager gaze beyond the ridge south, and, as I write, is again descending. The intense excitement existing can more easily be imagined than I can describe it. Boers with carts, waggons, and on horseback are leaving the town, going north.

We have from our quarters a fine view of the shells which continue bursting on the ridge and forts above the town, which are not defended by the Boers. Some in the know say our forces are feeling the country round, and that it is only a reconnaissance in force. It seems to me a waste of ammunition and certainly a dangerous feeler for the town inhabitants, as many of the shells appear to be bursting within the outskirts.

5th, Tuesday.—About one o'clock this morning the commandant of our guard came in and, after waking us, said that General Botha had sent him orders to move us; that we should walk about four miles to a railway station and then go by train east, where to he did not know. Colonel Hunt, our senior officer, refused to go; we all backed him. I went out with the intention of escaping if possible, but found it not possible. Our guards had been doubled and a party of mounted men were at the gate. I returned to the house, when I was met by Captain McInerney, of an Australian contingent, who said, "What do you think? Will the Boers fire on us if we make a

prisoner of the commandant?" I said, "No, I do not think so." We entered together and went to where the commandant was standing, surrounded by some of my fellow-prisoners. Placing his hand on that officer's shoulder he said, "You are my prisoner, sir!" "What!" said that individual in surprise, "do you mean it?" "Yes," replied McInerney, "I do. Your general is trying to play us false; President Kruger gave us his word we should not be moved if we assisted to keep the Waterfall prisoners quiet. We have fulfilled our part of the compact and now you want to move us." "Well, gentlemen," said the commandant, "I cannot help it; it is General Botha's order. However, release me, and I will tell the Boer guard that you refuse to go, and will explain to them what I know were the conditions made by the President, and give you my word that I will return to you." We were all satisfied that the man was in earnest, and let him go. I followed him to the gate and heard him fairly fulfil his promise to us. The Boer party then mounted their horses and galloped off, too glad apparently of the opportunity to get away. One shouted, as he rode off, "Now I am going home, and shall fight no more." Shortly after the commandant left us his assistant and his secretary came in and remained till he himself returned. The guard's things had all been loaded on a waggon and ready to start when the commandant went out, but were at once off-loaded. Thus a little determination saved us from being removed and the possibility of a further long time of imprisonment. I believe that the action of Captain McInerney

saved us. About eight a.m. troops were seen in the west formed up in long columns. Our hearts beat high, and many a grateful tear crawled down some cheeks I know. No firing, all was quiet. What does it mean? Suddenly a shout rose from the rear of our prison building, "Hurrah! here they come! We are free, we are free!" Two horsemen rode up to our gate, the Duke of Marlborough and Winston Churchill. The gate was rushed, opened, and we went out. The position was reversed, for our prisoners' servants became the guards of our late guards, but now our prisoners. We walked over to the town, free once more after many months in prison. Everywhere was khaki; many were the greetings of friends.

Already the advance guard of the column were arriving, and at two p.m. began the grand entry from the south. Lord Roberts with his staff arrived amidst the cheering of thousands (not all); many there were who looked scowlingly on without raising a hat or waving a kerchief; but who could blame them? they were not all visitors.

From the east, south, and west division after division marched past the General and his staff, who had taken up their stand near the Dutch Church on the Square. Alternately cavalry and infantry, travel-stained and worn (many of them) marched past, headed by small bands—truly a never-to-be forgotten sight. A small silk Union Jack, made by Lady Roberts to hoist at Pretoria, was run up, then, after all the troops had passed, a large "Jack" was hoisted to wave over the Transvaal, *this time* "as

long as the sun shall shine," D.V. The British Empire has placed the flag now, and not all the hypocrisy of Kruger or his associates can ever cause its removal again. Kruger—where is he? Gone, with all the gold, and left worthless paper to pay his servants and others with. Those who blessed him before now shower curses on his name. And are they to be blamed? God grant that we may never have cause to regret the change of flags.

I slept at my sister's house. About one o'clock something shook my bed. I woke, and lo! the door I had securely locked stood wide open! I felt for my candle and matches; they were gone. I felt for my clothes; gone too, money and all. I woke my brother-in-law; we searched and found my shirt and hat lying at the corner of the house, and, later on, my trousers near the well behind the house. My purse was gone, but a small bag in one of the pockets, containing gold, was still there. The thief had got a fright; for immediately on waking, and seeing the door open, I jumped up and shouted out, "Stand, you devil, or I will put a bullet into you!" This was bluff; an empty revolver hung on the bedstead, which I grasped, holster and all; but it had the desired effect evidently.

*6th, Wednesday.*—We were to-day inspected by Lord Roberts, having formed up in a semicircle before his quarters at Sunnyside. He came round to each in turn, from the right, and shook hands, inquiring the circumstances of our capture. His face struck me as one indicating a kindly spirit, but one of great will power. A little man in stature, but not in mind.

Boers coming in all day to lay down their arms. Soldiers about, disarming the townspeople quietly; no noise or violence displayed.

*7th, Thursday.*—Our late gaoler's wife, Mrs. du Plessis, sent for me. I went to see her. She complained that some soldiers had taken her cows' milk (she kept a few cows and had been in the habit of selling milk), but said an officer had interfered and she was satisfied. Said she wanted to go out to the scene of the last fight near the town, for her husband, sons, and some friends had fought there and some were missing. I gave the acting-gaoler, Jarvis, later a note to the Provost Marshal to get her a pass if possible. I asked her why her husband and sons did not stay in the town. She replied that her husband was afraid that the English would make soldiers of the sons, and that was the reason they left. He himself left because he intended fighting to the last. She said she was "surprised that the soldiers caused so little trouble to the people. They act just like 'Christie Mensehen' (Christian people). We were told they were worse than the Kaffirs. There is no noise, no burning or robbing of the houses; it is not as we were told it would be." And by such lies have the ignorant been misled and goaded on to a continuance of the hopeless struggle. Her husband, Jacobus du Plessis, knew better; he had been, as I have before stated, a British subject. I knew him first in Burghersdorp, in 1861; he trekked into the Transvaal, and in 1879 served under me at Secocoeni's.

Prisoners at Waterfall were fired on yesterday by the Boer artillery, and although the shells fell in the

camp and one or more struck the hospital, fortunately no one was hurt. Nine hundred were persuaded to go by train east, under the promise that they were to be released on the border.

*8th, Friday.*—Reported that Botha's commando is surrounded at Donker Hoek, farm of Hans Botha of 1881 renown.

Dined with an old friend, John Wagner, of Rustenburg days ; spent a pleasant two hours with him and his family. Saw some of the documents of former days which my friend has taken a great pleasure in collecting.

Have been trying to get a billet in Government service here. Is the British Government going to treat me as in 1881 ? Has the truth about Kuruman been told ?

*9th, Saturday.*—Reported that Botha was to meet Lord Roberts to-day. Paul Kruger said to have sent word to fight to the last.

Nurse Alma, of S.A.R. German Ambulance, says of the last attack on Mafeking, that the German corps led the way through the native town to the wire fence ; that, owing to the many tins in the way, their advance was discovered ; that the Boers ran when first cannon-shot was fired ; also, that on the day of the relief of Mafeking the Boers, including Commandant Snyman, all ran and left the nurses with the wounded in the ambulance to the mercy of the Kaffirs ; that Colonel Baden-Powell sent them protection. This account corroborates more I have heard of the same nature, and that the foreigners are cursing the Boers now for cowardice.

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10th, *Sunday*. — Fighting reported at Zwaart Kopjes. Lord Kitchener gone to Heidelberg.

11th, *Monday*. — Saw Colonel Hume, D.A.A.G. I asked what I had to do. After some conversation, he gave me a note to Captain Hughes, Intelligence Officer at the Government Offices, by whom I was engaged.

12th, *Tuesday*. — Commenced work to-day in Naturalisation Office of late Transvaal Government translating, after having made a list of some of the numerous documents I found there.

Rumoured that British have had severe losses to-day at Donkerpoort, several officers killed, amongst whom is Lord Cavendish. That Free State Boers have blown up Rhenoster River bridge, also that the railway line beyond Kroonstad is destroyed, and that a convoy of fifty waggons of ours has been captured. That the mail train between this and Bloemfontein has been captured and mails burnt.

13th *Wednesday*. — Several ambulance waggons in with wounded yesterday and to-day.

14th, *Thursday*. — The morning is bright and clear and looks peaceful here, while a few miles away men are striving to destroy one another. Why will Botha not give in? It seems criminal the manner in which the ignorant Boer is misled. What is he fighting for now? for they are practically conquered. "Fighting for their freedom," they say, poor ignorant mortals! Will they not be really free under the flag of old England, if England is but just to herself and to her people this time, and retains to the empire what it has cost so much blood and so many millions to attain?



Error on error has marked the track of British rule in South Africa in the past. We can only hope that the errors of the past, so dearly paid for, may be severe and lasting lessons to benefit England's future generations in South Africa and the empire. Why, why are the people of the country ignored? Why not a proper standing Court or Board of Investigation, composed jointly of men of practical experience, sons of the soil, combined with Imperial men, appointed? Even now one sees the beginning of errors, and I fear the future.

News this afternoon that Botha had fallen back towards Middleburg; in an engagement yesterday his men charged a battery, but were repulsed with loss.

*15th, Friday.*—Official news to-day that General Buller had crossed Laing's Nek; that General Baden-Powell and General Hunter are at Potchefstroom; that Methuen has smashed up De Wet's commando; that Botha's rear-guard had been severely punished at Donkerpoort; that our losses since Monday the 4th are about 100 all told.

*16th, Saturday.*—Usual routine of news to-day. Amongst the list is that Baden-Powell had occupied Rustenburg; that 1,000 rifles had been laid down there; that a notice will shortly be issued by Lord Roberts, "That as the cutting of the telegraph wires is of such frequent occurrence, all houses in the vicinity of said cuttings will in the future be burnt." Andries Cronje's commando have laid down their arms.

*17th, Sunday.*—Went visiting to-day after church.

Heard that Herbert Brown, who assisted me at Kuruman, was in hospital.

*18th, Monday.*—Went to artillery barracks, passed Court of Enquiry on Prisoners of War. Saw Herbert Brown at artillery barracks hospital. Baden-Powell and staff arrived to-day from Rustenburg, where his forces are stationed.

*19th, Tuesday.*—Met Baden-Powell and McKenzie this morning. The latter I had known previous to the war, a smart and intelligent fellow. Baden-Powell asked me whether I would like to be exchanged to his command, which I gladly agreed to, and am looking forward to the transfer and the chances of leave to return home to see my family.

*20th, Wednesday.*—Finished 1,178 documents to-day, inspection of some and translation of others, chiefly applications for full franchise and letters of naturalisation. Commenced Waterfall papers. Had lunch with Coute Green; met him first in 1864 at Thaba N'Chu, prior to the war of 1865, in which he took a part as one of the Bloemfontein Rangers, of which I was also a member.

*21st, Thursday.*—Rumours of a speedy close of the war. I don't think so.

*22nd, Friday.*—At usual work again, inspecting and translating Dutch documents.

*23rd, Saturday.*—Went to artillery barracks again at eleven a.m., to see Lieut.-Colonel Briggs in re Court of Enquiry into treatment of prisoners of war. Met Davey of the Glosters.

*24th, Sunday.*—Went to Johannesburg to meet Major Reade of the Intelligence. Had a great

difficulty in finding quarters; succeeded at last, by the aid of an old Border Horse man, to find a place where I could get a bed and meals.

*25th, Monday.*—Went to the Military Governor's office to ascertain where Major Reade could be found. After sending in my name to the D.A.A.G., one Captain —, I was ushered in and was met with a curt "Well, what do you want?" in that Little Englander tone that we Africanders don't like. I looked at the individual and replied calmly that I had come to find out the whereabouts of Major Reade of the Intelligence, and that I had been told that the only one who could give me the information was the Military Governor. I gave him my pass, which he took away and brought back with the words "Major Reade has left for Heidelberg yesterday afternoon" written on the face of it. I did not meet Major Reade, and so had my trip for naught. Met some blunt but courteous Colonial friends later, which made some amends for the other man's manner; but then he wore stars, and they don't fit everybody.

*26th, Tuesday.*—Returned to Pretoria. Browning, of the Canadians, and self travelled together. Reported at the office and got instructions to proceed to Rustenburg by post cart next morning.

*27th, Wednesday.*—Started by post cart at 8.30 a.m., arrived at Wolhuter's Kop about 2.30 p.m.; found Captain Glynn, with a party of men of Plumer's force, there collecting Boer arms. He had a prisoner by the name of Ras, a field-cornet, who had been sent to commandeer men in the district of Pretoria

by his commandant. Was asked by Glynn to take Ras with me to Rustenburg, which I did. We arrived here at about 8.35 p.m. I handed Ras over to Colonel Plumer; he was placed in gaol. Met the General, Baden-Powell, who informed me that I should now take my orders from Lord Cecil, who was in charge of the Western District as Special Commissioner.

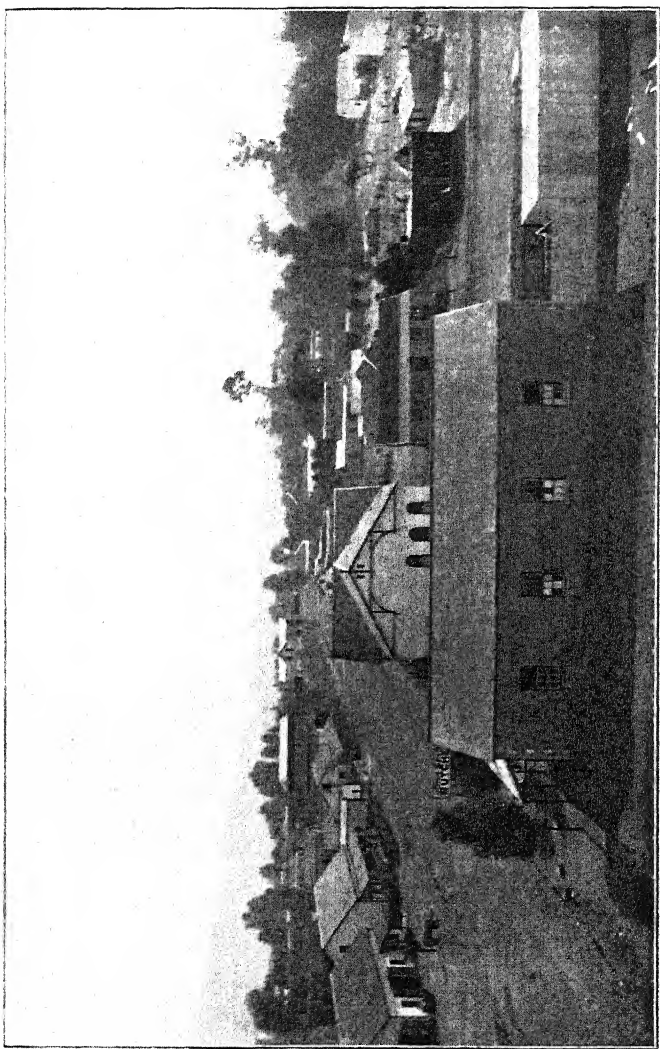
*28th, Thursday.*—Met many old friends, and many memories of the past came to mind as I walked the well-known paths of years ago. Arranged to board and lodge in the house that was once mine and that I lost for loyalty in 1881. Saw the General again at eleven a.m. Major Godley, staff officer, wired to Lord Cecil *re* myself.

*29th, Friday.*—Met Major Godley again, and was by him informed that Lord Cecil wished me to report to the Assistant Commissioner, Captain Marsh, which I did. He offered me the billet as magistrate's clerk, which I declined, and was appointed as Assistant Native Commissioner of the Western District, which included Rustenburg, Zee-rust, and West Lichtenburg districts. Captain Marsh informed me that my salary would be the same as that paid by the South African Republic, "and perhaps more, certainly not less." Captain Smitherman of the Rhodesian force, under Plumer, was Acting-Commissioner of Natives for the Western District. I took over the work, and thus commenced my work in old Rustenburg once more. Is it to be my home again? Am promised leave to go home to Vryburg to settle my affairs there as soon as Smitherman

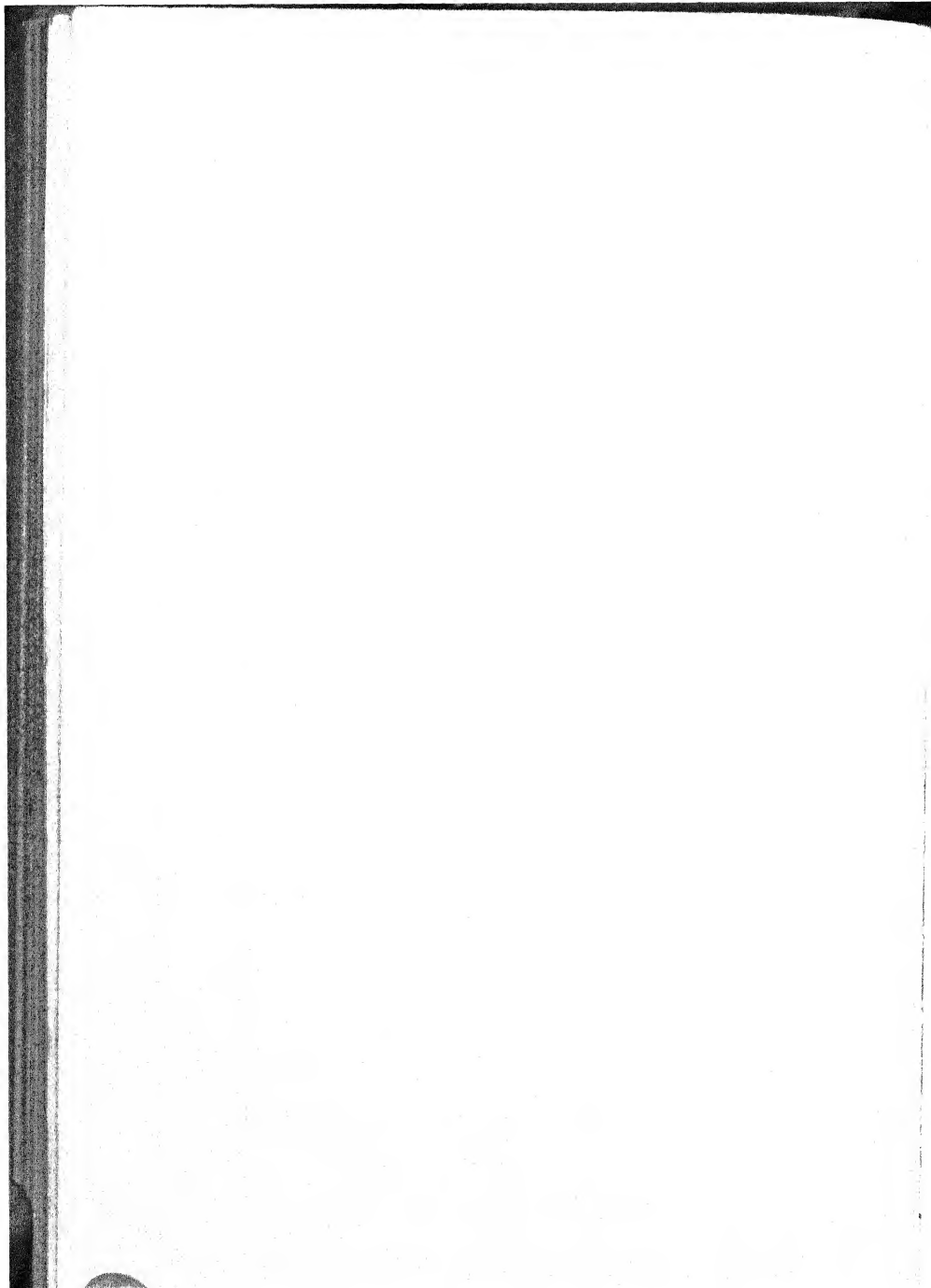
returns; he is away on Intelligence work. Had supper with old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Dawes and family.

*30th, Saturday.*—Sent native cyclist with despatches to Smitherman, who is at a native kraal beyond the Crocodile. Met old friends from Blaauwbank to-day, Messrs. John Jennings and Tom Hinds, also Mrs. W. Jennings from Nooitgedacht. Old John and myself had a long conversation together about the past, of old friends past and gone. My eyes saw mist, and I know my companion felt that way too, and, as I write, reminiscences of the past crowd into my mind. Many acts of youthful daring can I recall; many an effort to do my duty, and successful in most cases. I received no pay for past work in 1881; it is past, unrecognised, unrewarded; promises made me, broken. I feel that I am to be rewarded at last, perhaps. Vividly the past comes before me as I write. I can recall how bitterly I felt the unjust treatment meted me in the past. An all-prevailing desire ever ruled me to do the right earnestly, energetically, and well; but enough of this for the present. I wish I could let "the dead past bury its dead," but I feel I must vent my pent-up feelings sometimes.

*July 1st, Sunday.*—The morning is cloudy and the air damp. A steady rain poured down during last night. What will the superstitious Boers say? Will they call this a blessing? Will they say that the sky weeps for the downfall of their oligarchic Government? Or will they say that it is a forerunner of blessing on the land? Went to the little village church this



A VIEW OF RUSTENBURG



morning, and my thoughts carried me back to times gone by; I enjoyed the service very much. The minister, the Rev. Maber, now very old, conducted the service earnestly, but with the quavering voice of age.

*2nd, Monday.*—Sent two native cyclists to Bethanie with despatches for Smitherman. Constant reports of cattle stealing by Linchwe's natives from the north of the Crocodile. It is said that Linchwe himself was with a party of natives looting the Boer farms.



## CHAPTER V

THUS far from my diary, which ends on the 2nd of July. The following are the translations I made from the *Volkstem* while in prison at Pretoria, which show how every means were used to incite the Boers to continue the strife.

An exhortation from the *Volkstem*, Wednesday, 16th May, 1900 :—

“How long *halt ye* between two opinions? Fellow-burghers, what is the reason that ye are so doubtful? Why do you turn your backs to the enemy? Why do you withdraw from the strife? Where is now your faith? Where are the people of heroic courage? Where is the spirit of the pioneers? Why do you allow the enemy to say in derision, ‘Where is now their God’? Can it be that the children of the able Voortrekkers, who for years struggled undaunted against endless troubles, and countless numbers of the enemy, will, after seven months’ fighting, give up the struggle? Have you no faith more? Do you mean that you are acting as God would have you act, when you cease the struggle, which is not of your seeking, but which was forced on you? Will you give to the arch enemies of our race the inheritance bought with blood and drenched with tears of your forefathers, without first using all your efforts to retain it? Is this the gratitude you show towards your forefathers, who suffered so long to secure you one inheritance, one free state? And do you not fear the curses of

your children and children's children, when they become acquainted with the fact that they, through your faults, through your cowardice, your carelessness, your selfishness, have lost the glorious and dearly bought heritage of your fathers, and become, instead of masters and free, slaves and hirelings in our Fatherland? Is this a war of Kruger or Joubert? Is it not a general national struggle for the people's existence? Which of you did not, when our old President, fearing this war (which some of you dare charge him with bringing about), tried by every means in his power to avoid; who of you, I say, did not call out with indignation, 'No! not an inch more give, rather fight'?

"Fellow-burghers, has not God showed in an undoubted manner that He is with us? Did He not in the first months enable us with a handful of ours to overcome a mighty multitude of the enemy? Has He not spared the lives of our braves in a most wonderful manner against the thousands and tens of thousands of bullets which the hellish machines of the enemy cast on them? Have not friends and enemies been astonished at the small numbers of our killed and wounded, as against the hundreds and thousands of killed and wounded on the side of the enemy? And is the same God not mighty enough to preserve us still, though small in numbers? Not alone your leaders, but also the foreign officers, who up to the present have fought or sympathised with us, assured you that nothing is lost if our people will only stand firmly. What is the reason that so many are withdrawing from the strife, deserting or remaining at home, thus causing their brother burghers—fellows in the strife—who up to the present were full of faith and hope on your account, and through your neglect of duty, to be killed, wounded, or taken prisoners, or in time lose heart also?

"Fellow-burghers, there must come a change, and that at once, otherwise our country is lost and your freedom for

ever gone. 'Do not imagine in your souls,' as Modena said to Esther, 'that you will escape.' The sentence is fixedly resolved against us. Milner let it slip him. Did he not say, 'Africanderdom must be broken'? The English Government is already making plans to give your lands to the soldiers and volunteers who fought against us, whose hands are still dripping with the blood of your fellow-burghers—relatives probably—and who will after our fall be called upon to assist in conveying us away. Do you not know what has occurred in the south and south-western districts of the Free State and in Bechuanaland? Do you not know that, according to official reports from General C. De Wet and Froneman, the subjected parts of the Free State are totally ruined, notwithstanding the pretty proclamation of Roberts? Do you not know what brutalities have been committed during the past week in Bechuanaland? How women and children in sickness have been driven from their homes, their houses burnt, dead bodies exhumed and cast on the veld? Is it not known to you that, according to official reports, the soldiers ran about the streets of Boshoff naked, and their shameful conduct with Kaffir women? Is it not known to you that in Bloemfontein disgusting diseases, from which, according to English statistics of 1895-97-98, the pet of the English army suffered, have broken out among the poor whites and Kaffirs? And when all this occurs in the Free State, which was so friendly towards the English, and out of which a portion are now so willing to lay down their arms, what can we expect in the hated Transvaal, which has always been a thorn in England's side? What will happen, if God does not preserve us from it and you do not do your duty, is this:—

"(a) The English troops will, out of revenge, plunder and rob you of everything.

"(b) All burghers will be disarmed; no one will be

allowed a gun or a cartridge in their homes, and they who dare disobey and are discovered will be treated like the poor du Plooy at Bloemfontein (father and son sentenced to one year's hard labour on the breakwater), and see all their property confiscated.

"(c) Through the disarming, the Boer—the independent man of former days—becomes defenceless even against the Kaffir, who, under English rule, becomes the equal of the white man, and surely more than formerly protected and indulged. Think of Bezuidenhout and the Hottentot!

"(d) Through the disarming act, which naturally during the first years will be strictly carried out, hunting will be stopped and the Boer will see his lands destroyed by wild animals. Besides this, he will have to put up with the shooting and hunting over his lands by British officers or lords, and taking away the game killed, which he (the Boer) has the first right to.

"(e) Through the lawful equality of Kaffirs and all coloured people with the white man, the Boer, who has been accustomed to treat and look upon them as children and minors—in the street, train, church and school, in the courts of justice, and everywhere—will have to treat them as equals; and where he may venture to uproot this, a strong hand will quickly remind him of his subjection.

"(f) Through the existence of equality and through the instreaming of so much of the English element of all sorts, mixed marriages will become the rule instead of the exception; thus a class of bastards will increase, who so readily inherit the bad, but little of the good qualities of the white man. Bad disorders and sin will spread.

"(g) In the interest of the new arrivals, who by all possible ways will be encouraged to settle here as agricultural and stock farmers, a strict fencing law will be enacted, and those who do not fulfil the requirements of the law will be heavily fined, or see before his eyes that the Government

has the work done, and then the account will be sent him for payment, and in case he is not in position to pay same, his property will be sold to cover the amount of cost.

"(k) The tremendous war costs that England has incurred to destroy us will have to be paid by the Boer. His already too much taxed farm will not bear the additional heavy tax, and the result will be that the farm, the heritage of his fathers, will be sold for debt and fall into the hands of strangers.

"(l) Milner has spoken it, and others with him: 'The Africander must be broken, and a second war like the present must for ever be made impossible. The Boer must go down, must be totally destroyed. Disarming, equality with the natives, and taxes are not the only means whereby to attain that object. By low railway tariff on articles from other English colonies, competition will be so keen that the Boer will not be able to stand against it; he will not make his expenses, not be able to pay his taxes, lose his land, and from master become servant!

"(j) The new administration will take care that the Boer, the feared antagonist, will not be able to earn anything, and thus not be able to rise again.

"(k) The Dutch Church will be superseded by the English State Church, and, owing to the poverty of the congregation, the Dutch ministers will lose their influence with the people.

"(l) The national language will be superseded by the English, and systematically suppressed, and whoever does not understand English will have but little to break into his milk.

"(m) The sons of the soil will be kept out of all official positions, and, as farming will not pay, they will have to endeavour to earn their food by hard labour, and to compete with the English and other Uitlanders, who in trade and ability in labour far excel them.

"(n) The capitalists have already said that they intend to reduce the number of white labourers after the war and make the Kaffirs work for less. For the sons of the soil there will be little or no chance at the mines to succeed, or even to get work, and so they will by poverty and want be driven to join the English Army, and side by side with the long-suffering and low-standing Tommy Atkins, fight in strange lands for England's flag. But already enough!

"Fellow-burghers, think over these points, and if you do not yet feel that it is in your own interests at once to take your weapon and stand alongside your brothers at the front, well, then you have earned the lot that I have endeavoured to sketch, which will be that of the conquered Transvaaler; then you are jointly with others responsible for the death of your fathers and fellow-burghers who have fallen in struggle for right and freedom. Then you are ungrateful to God, who will make you hear His words, 'I wanted to make of you a great nation, but ye would not.'

"(Sgd.) A FELLOW-BURGHER."

I have given the foregoing as literally as possible. Many such effusions graced the columns of the *Volks-tem* during the war, written, no doubt, by men who knew that the statements contained in them were utterly false, but done to urge on the credulous and ignorant Boer. Much may have been meant by some writers in a purely patriotic spirit, but the majority of those who filled the local organ of the day with their trash were of the class who urge others on to do the hard and dangerous duties of war while they remain in safety at home, being in a position to pay for substitutes. Of such, alas! there were too many, but the quality or numbers were not confined to the Transvaal, the Cape Colony

had its share, amongst whose number could be counted men from whom better things might well have been expected. They may not have had their substitutes to fight for them, but urged others on to do the dirty work while they sat in safety under the shadow of Table Mountain, or elsewhere.

I give another letter translated from the *Volkstem* by myself while in prison, an amusing though ridiculous concoction of untruths under the guise of religious exhortation, that best suited to reach the ignorant Boer. The extract is from the *Volkstem* of the 17th May, 1900, and dated Carolina, 12th May, 1900, and is as follows:—

“To the Editor of the *Volkstem*.

“SIR,—As matters in our country are becoming so serious, and the sun of our Africanderdom threatens to go down, I will also write a little bit to encourage our striving burghers and to show those staying-at-home burghers their duty.

“It is a thorn in my heart to hear that the burghers have so little courage to fight. Oh! dear burghers, have you then no trust or faith? Do you place no trust in your Lord Jesus Christ? ‘Whosoever trusts in the Lord have not built their house upon sand.’ In 1 Samuel xiv. we read that Jonathan and his armour-bearer beat the enemy. Why could he do it? Because he put his trust in the Lord. Saul had much success in his reign until he failed to do the commandments of the Lord; he neglected the Lord and God deserted him. What was the result of his disobedience? He fell in his strife against the enemy.

“Oh! burghers, neglect not the Lord, forget not to pray; in the fight pray; a single sigh the Lord will hear. Let us people of the Transvaal and Free State raise our voices

to Zion, from whence shall come our help. Let us humble ourselves before God and leave all that is sinful. Let those who have unrighteously taken loot or stolen give back the booty or stolen goods. Some will say, 'I am ashamed to be a thief before the eye of the world,' but I say to you that if you in truth repent it is no shame.

"You burghers that are remaining at home, does not your manly heart call you to the front? Truly a shame that still so many healthy men remain at home, the one for one reason, the other for another; others trek away. Why does the Government not stop the trekking? They may get stock again, but never again our country. When will such men regret their acts? When it is too late. Those who remain at home have no national [or patriotic] feelings in them. Some say, 'I have not caused any war'; then I can thus stand by and see how my fellow-householders strive to save our burning homes, and say, 'Strive away, all of you; I did not light the house.' Deborah says in her song of praise, 'Curse Meros,' etc., but I say, 'Curse those who stay at home and take no part in the strife.'

"Dear burghers, have you thought over the case? Is it not terrible to think that, if the enemy gain the victory, they will exhibit the head of our *beloved President in a dish in the London streets*? If your little children should ask you, 'Pa, why did the Boers lose?'—will you say to them, 'It was because I, and more such cowards, stayed at home and took no part in the strife'? Will you not blush before your children? Is it not terrible to think that the farms you have so long occupied have fallen into the hands of others? Almost on every farm are graves of loved ones. How will you feel to have to leave those graves and trek away into the wilderness? You will then regret it, but, alas! too late. Some may say, 'It will not be as hard as all that.' To such I say read the history of Ireland, or ask the Irish; they will tell you what it is to be ruled by



England. We women are too weak to go into the strife; we can help the men by praying for them. Dear burgheresses, pray for your husbands, encourage them to go to the front. Do not needlessly call them home.

"Awake, burghers! see what danger our country is in. I pray you read my writing, and think earnestly of what will become of you and yours. I have much more to write, but am afraid of requiring too much space. Sir Editor, I thank you in anticipation for placing these lines, and name myself

"A YOUNG BURGERESS."

Many more like the foregoing appeared in the columns of the *Volkstem*, too plainly showing that the Boers were tired of the war, hence the necessity of such exhortations; but, as I before said, they emanated from those who had taken no part in the actual strife. The poor worn-out burgher had, in most instances, enough of war, but was urged on to contend further in the futile struggle by his ministers. Leaders, and in many cases the women and letters such as I have quoted, had much to do with it; but later on the burning of the houses by our troops, in pursuance of Lord Roberts' Notice, did more to combine the scattered and shaky Boer forces than all the prevailing and women influence could do. It was a fatal error, and tended to make them fight more bitterly, though perhaps more warily than before. The burning of houses had brought about unity among the burghers again, and they fought and destroyed in sheer desperation. Again a little want of judgment brought about what Lord Roberts fain would have undone, had it been possible.

## CHAPTER VI

ON the evening of the 3rd July I had just gone to my lodging when Thornton, my clerk, came in and said Colonel Hoare wanted me at the telegraph office at once, that some important news had come in from the General. (I must here mention that General Baden-Powell had left eastward with the whole of his force, excepting about sixty mounted men, a few dismounted details, and a considerable number of ox-waggon of his transport; Colonel Hoare was left in charge of Rustenburg.) I went over at once, and found Colonel Hoare outside the telegraph office in a nervous state of excitement. He handed me a note from the General and one from Colonel Godley. The latter was requesting me to get horses and take Mrs. Godley (who was in Rustenburg) on to Zeerust. The other note contained a repetition of that to Colonel Hoare. The orders to Hoare were to evacuate at once and fall back on Zeerust, taking all transport with us, and to turn back all convoys on the road hither, and to wire Lord Cecil to entrench at once, that Rustenburg was to be attacked that night by 2,000 Boers with cannon. After sending the wire to Zeerust, we hurried up to the camp near the prison, and orders were at once given to break up and go, which was done in all

speed. No time was lost, for 2,000 Boers with cannon was too tall an order for us. I asked one of the conductors to get my kit at Mrs. de Lange's boarding-house as the waggons passed. *He promised, but then the Boers were coming*, and so he forgot. After seeing all off and having arranged with a major of the New Zealand contingent, who had a cart, to take Mrs. Godley on to Zeerust, I went the rounds of the village to commandeer horses and equipment. Thornton had a horse. I had neither horse, saddle, nor bridle. I first got two horses and a saddle complete from Mr. Schoch, an inhabitant of the town; but later, having got a really good horse, in the possession of an old friend, Duncan McKenzie, belonging to S. Le Roux, I left the other two to be brought on by another young man who was to accompany us, but did not start, as I later found out, but returned the horses to Mr. Schoch. I was ably assisted by some of the inhabitants, among whom was Piet Kruger, son of the late President, in getting information as to the advance of the Boers, for I remained behind for the purpose some three hours after the column had left. Up to the time we left, about ten o'clock, no Boer commando was anyway near. We caught up to the column about twelve o'clock, south of Magoto's Nek; they were still trekking along the heavy muddy roads, for it had been raining. After some difficulty in the dark, I found Colonel Hoare, and suggested outspanning, which he would not hear of. I pointed out that he would be the gainer by doing so, as it was over the cattle's time to sleep, that if he gave them an hour they

would travel on again all right, but if not, when the sun rose, they would be fairly done up. After some persuasion he agreed, and asked me to arrange about camping ground. I knew of a bare piece of rising ground on ahead, and immediately rode on. On reaching the spot I heard a waggon on ahead travelling. I was some distance in advance of the other waggons. The conductors were not attending to their duty, or this one waggon could not be so far ahead. I rode on and caught up to the waggon near Selons River Drift; so there was no help for it, all would have to cross. I told the driver of the waggon to span out on the other side. The other waggons came up by degrees some time after, and, as the last outspanned, those that had first arrived were again inspanning. *No time, for fear the dreaded 2,000 and guns would be on us.*

I had meanwhile gone to a store near the drift, and, after knocking for some time, managed to get someone to answer, but no door was opened. I offered payment for some coffee or tea. The reply was: "I have nothing." So with nothing I had to content myself, and after saddling off I managed to find some forage for my horse. I was content, and lay down for some time, sleeping for about half an hour. Thornton I had not seen since we caught up to the waggons near the Nek.

Just as the day was dawning I saddled up and found that the last of the convoy was leaving, the others were miles ahead. I rode on and found waggons scattered along the road, covering several miles. About seven o'clock I found Thornton, or

rather he found me, as he had missed me in the dark of the night before. We rode to a farmhouse near by to try and get a cup of coffee. There we found two men and two women, with their children, and got a cup of coffee, or, rather, a beverage made from the roots of a well-known tree, called "Witte Bast" (white bark). Anyhow it was something warm, for we were cold and damp. We stayed talking to the people for some time, about the war principally. They seemed to be glad that there were prospects of a speedy end to hostilities; but said, "You people are now going back. The commandos of De la Rey, Lemmer, or others, will come round here and force us to take up arms again. We have all surrendered our arms and bound ourselves to remain neutral. We do not wish to fight any more, we have had enough of it and are satisfied we have done our best and cannot do more. Now what protection do you give us? Your General's plans are wrong."

I tried to satisfy them, and said, "We are not leaving you. General Baden-Powell is still in the district with his forces, and we are shortly returning to Rustenburg. They were not satisfied, but said, "Yes, the English in 1879 caused us great trouble, for you know that many of us in this part would not fight, but went into laager at Coster's River, as we would not fight against them. Many of us wanted the British Government here, but what did you do? You went away and left us to the mercy of the Transvaal Government. Sir Garnet Wolseley said 'that the British flag would wave over this country as long as the sun shone.'" I could only say, "It will

not be so this time," but too well I saw the mistake. All who laid down their arms should have been removed to some place out of reach of the Boer leaders, ostensibly as prisoners, but really only out of harm's way for their own sakes and ours.

By the time we left the waggons had all passed, and we found a rear-guard, consisting of some Australians, riding in a straggling manner along the road. A sergeant was in charge, whom I asked what his orders were. He said, "To ride behind the waggons and act as rear-guard." I said, "But you are absolutely useless as you are now riding, for who is to warn you of any approach of an enemy from the rear? Have you no rear scouts out?" He said, "No, sir." I then sent Thornton on to find Colonel Hoare, with a note pointing out what I thought necessary, and told him to explain besides: "That as we were crossing a rugged country, full of ridges, how necessary it was to have proper precautions taken, for, if attacked at all, it would be from the rear." He returned, after being absent about an hour and a half, with a note from Hoare asking me to take charge of the rear. I then showed the sergeant what to do. The men all seemed pleased when it was explained to them that eight men should remain behind the rear-guard on the highest points until the convoy crossed the next ridge in front, then four were to proceed on to that ridge, and as the next was reached they were relieved by those left, and so on from ridge to ridge, thus always being able to give notice of the approach of the enemy. I, with Thornton, also remained with them, as per Colonel Hoare's wish.

We camped for breakfast at Woodstock, the farm of Willie McDonald, who had a store on the place. I was most hospitably treated by him. We arrived at Eland's River about ten o'clock that night, without any misadventure, and, as neither Thornton nor myself had blankets, I told Colonel Hoare that I would push on to Zeerust, and in company with Lazarus, a young man of Wiel's transport service, who, by the way, was staying for a few days at the same boarding-house in Rustenburg as I was, but whom we had forgotten. He woke, the morning after we had *departed*, and finding how matters stood, hurriedly followed on horseback, and caught us up during the day, I think at Woodstock. We went down to the drift, where a mill was situated, and having been informed that the owner was at his house behind the mill, we called, and saw a white woman working in the kitchen. I asked her if we might get a cup of coffee and something to eat, for which I offered payment. She said she had none. We had to be satisfied, and, cold and hungry, we rode on. Lazarus said he knew a man named Leon a few miles further on, whom he was sure would do all he could for us. We arrived at Leon's place about eleven p.m., and, after waking him, got all we wanted and civility into the bargain. Of course we paid for what we got, including a bed each, for we decided to remain till daylight.

The next morning our host was up before the day broke and had coffee ready for us. We hastily drank one cup each, and continued our journey, arriving at Zeerust that evening. The next morning I reported

to Lord Cecil, and at the same time got leave to go home the following week, as there were some matters requiring attention there, as also regarding the working of the intelligence of the district.

The natives employed for intelligence work were local men, and, knowing the influence the Boers had over them, I suggested to the Commissioner, Lord Cecil, that I should bring up some Basutos from Vryburg when I went down; this he agreed to. The men I intended bringing up were some of the Basutos I had employed before in campaigns in Bechuanaland, and were most useful and trustworthy.

After settling a dispute about the chieftainship at "Dinokani," Kalafins Stadt, and some other matters, I left for home by post cart to Mafeking, and from there by train to Vryburg, where I was again united with my family after ten months' absence, five of which I spent in prison life in Pretoria.

Before I left Zeerust, and knowing that an acting-magistrate's clerk was required at Rustenburg, I suggested to Lord Cecil that my son Harry should come up, knowing that he was qualified to fill the billet; he consented.

After twelve days spent at home, I returned, having a few days previously sent the Basutos, sixteen in number, on to Zeerust; my son accompanied me. On our arrival at Zeerust I heard that Rustenburg had been occupied by a detachment of our troops under Major Tracey a couple of days after we left; that the Boers had attacked them, but had been beaten off, but that the road was closed to Rustenburg. Colonel Hoare was still at Eland's



River, where he had been ordered to remain. That the Boers had been forced, such as had surrendered and were left on their farms, to take up arms again in the Zeerust, as in most other districts. The event, by some of us expected, had come true.

I again settled down to my work at Zeerust. My son was engaged *pro tem.* in the office of the District Commissioner, Lord Cecil; his salary, like mine, had not been paid. We boarded for the time being at an hotel, intending to get quarters of our own later.

The Basutos I had engaged for my intelligence work proved both good and faithful. The news they brought me could always be relied on. A report brought in by them that Colonel Hoare had been attacked proved true, and that the Boers were taking up positions around his camp.

A short time after my return to Zeerust, Sir F. Carrington arrived with his column, consisting of about 1,700 men of a thorough good stamp, chiefly Australians, Rhodesians, and Cape Colonials. I stood alongside of Carrington as his force marched through to the relief of Hoare, and certainly I never saw a force I liked better. Horses and men were fully fit, besides which the artillery was all that one could wish. I remarked to General Carrington with such a force he could go anywhere; but he didn't. He came back without relieving Hoare at Eland's River, who was besieged by a force consisting of about 400 Boers under Lemmer.

The evening after Carrington's return I was in the hotel, and was informed that there was talk of evacuating Zeerust. I asked Lord Cecil, who said he was

not aware of any such intention. We all went to bed late that night. The next morning Captain Blum, who had been acting as magistrate of Lichtenburg, came into my room about seven o'clock and said, "What! in bed yet? Why, the column is moving, and they have already set alight to the stores." "What!" I said, "clearing out and evacuating? Why? What for?" "I do not know," he replied; "they are the General's orders." Both my son and myself hurriedly dressed and went out. Sure enough, there were the stores burning on the hill, while the village was all bustle and confusion, men galloping madly hither and thither. Anxious loyalists on foot seeking means of conveyance for their families. Everybody seemed in a hurry, and no one seemed to know why. I found Lord Cecil at last, at our offices, and saluting, said, "Why are we evacuating this place, sir? Do not go; let us remain here. I am sure with a force of 300 men we can hold it." "Dennison," he replied, "I have to obey orders, and so must you." "Very good, sir," I replied, and walked away disgusted, mad. I sent my son by the coach. Our kit was left behind as the waggon had gone, and there was no room on the coach for it. I remained behind until my horse was jumped by a Boer, and late that evening, about nine o'clock, I rode out, having been helped by a friend in Zeerust with another horse and equipment, which I got late. It was moonlight, and, as I rode at a gentle trot near Jacobsdal, I was suddenly fired on from both sides, but not hit. I at once galloped forward, and could hear horses' hoofs behind me and a shout. I kept

on until I saw an open place towards the ridge on my right. I turned short at right angles and made for the ridge, on reaching which I hurriedly dismounted, gave the horse a cut with a small switch I had in my hand, and away he went towards Zeerust. The reason why I drove the animal off was that I could not ride him in the ridge, and, had I left him, the Boers following would have got him. Barely had I crept into the stony ridge when I heard my pursuers coming on towards me. They had passed the open glade, and finding later that I was not in front of them, they retraced their way and found my spoor by moonlight, which they followed on to the hill above the glade. As they dismounted one of them said, "He is hiding in the ridge; he is an old schelm." I knew that voice, but could never call to mind the owner of it, and was satisfied, however, that I had been waylaid by men of Zeerust—there were two. Had I been armed I should have been all right, but had only a switch in my hand. I crept gently up that ridge, being careful to make no noise. The Boers did not ascend, but walked about the foot of the ridge for a short time, then mounted and rode away. I then walked on for about an hour or more, and then, feeling tired and sleepy, crept into a bush, broke down some of the bushes, and went to sleep. Just as the day was dawning I awoke, and walked along the ridge towards Malmani. I could look down on the farmhouses below, and when it became unwise to go on further, I hid among the rocks and bush on the ridge. About midday, feeling very hungry and thirsty, and noticing some Kaffir

huts below me some distance from a farmhouse, I resolved to descend and seek food and water. As I approached one of the huts a woman came from a stream near carrying water in a can. She gave me to drink, and having some small coin with me, I purchased a few raw eggs and some boiled corn, which I hastily ate. The woman was friendly, and said that she would not tell her masters that she had seen an Englishman. She said she had heard that morning that a commando of Boers were beyond Jacobsdal, and advised me to wait in the hills until it was dark and then push on to Mafeking. The woman was very intelligent for her class, and asked why the English were running away again. She said, "The Boers are afraid of the English, but the English are worse than the Boers, for they run away and are the stronger." Alas! yes, one of the most disgraceful things enacted during the war that ever came to my knowledge was the evacuation of Zeerust and the burning of £90,000 worth of stores, or thereabouts. Not only the hurry, but the contemptible haste to get away from a foe distant at least twenty-five miles at the time.

The woman seemed inclined to talk more, but I dare not delay, as at any moment a stray Boer might turn up, and I was not anxious to be a prisoner again. So bidding her "Good-bye," I hurried back into the hills again, taking care to keep as much under cover of the trees as possible. I again hid until the sun was about down, then walked quickly on along the ridge until I got at the extreme end of the valley above Lemmer's farm, where I found some

water, and, after a drink, went on again. On reaching the high country I suddenly came face to face with a friendly Boer, in search of cattle, he said, which he now had reason to think had been taken by our forces on their way out. Very probable, I thought.

"Now," said he, "do not delay, for Lemmer's commando is not far off—in fact, his advance is already on that hill"—pointing to a bushy hill about a mile off—"and," he continued, "they may have seen you ere this, but go quickly until you get among the rocks yonder; it will soon be dark, and you will be safe, but be careful in passing Malmani."

I did not delay longer, but shaking hands with him, went, and did so with all the energy I possessed until I got among the rocks, about six miles from Malmani. Rested for a few minutes, and again walked, arriving at Malmani about nine p.m. Walking warily along the road until I got opposite a house with a verandah to it covered by creepers, I heard women's voices speaking English, and went to the gate; there was sufficient light from the moon to distinguish three ladies sitting on the stoep. One of them, an old lady, got up and came towards me as I greeted her. She hesitated, and then it struck me I was without a hat, with a handkerchief tied round my head, so that my appearance was not conducive to that confidence one would like to inspire, more so when you are hungry and thirsty. However, matters were soon explained, and a kindly welcome, with a cup of tea and some bread and butter, was given me, besides which the old lady

gave me a cap to replace the hat I had lost and the coloured handkerchief which had been my headgear for the last twenty-four hours. I found out that one Henrik Gey still lived at Malmani, and, after bidding my kind hostesses farewell and thanking them, I made my way to Gey's house. (I may here state that most people, farmers and others, had commenced their peaceful avocations since shortly after the 5th June—the date of Lord Roberts' entry into Pretoria—thinking that the war was practically over.) On my arrival at Gey's house I was welcomed both by him and his wife; the latter hastily got me some food, while I rested on a sofa in the dining-room talking to my host. He said he had two horses in his stable, and both were at my service; and "now," said he, "try and sleep for a short time until my wife has something to eat ready for you, and then I will wake you." I turned over and was asleep in a few minutes, but was awoke shortly after by people talking, and found that some neighbours—two women and two men, Boers all—were in the room. As I rose and greeted them one of the men left, apparently in a hurry. I had something to eat, and then reclined on the sofa again, waiting for Gey, who had gone out. He came hurriedly in after a short time, and said, "There is danger, and I am in a fix; the man you saw go out has gone to the commando camp at Malmani Eye (meaning the fountain source) to inform De la Rey that you are here. Now, if I assist you to get away I shall get quite into trouble, and as you are my friend I cannot let you become a prisoner." "All right," I

said, rising, "where are your horses?" "In the stable close by," he replied. "Well," I said, "let your son mount one, and I will mount the other, and we shall ride hard for about four miles; your son can then return with the horses, and I will proceed on foot." "For your sake," he replied, "I will risk it, but I know I shall have trouble." The horses were saddled, and we went at a stiff gallop for about four or five miles. I then sent the horses back and walked on. For assisting me Gey had everything taken from him by the Boers, and was later on sent to St. Helena by our forces. I, however, did what I could for him later by writing to the magistrate of Zeerust after peace in reference to compensation for his losses.

About midnight I caught up to a waggon outspanned, and from a native, who sat shivering over the remains of a fire, I ascertained that his master was an Englishman, who, with his family, was fleeing from Jacobsdal. The owner of the waggon hearing my voice, got up and came down from the waggon. I told him my tale. He spanned in at once, and I rode on his waggon for some miles, until, when near Mafeking, we came on the rear of General Carrington's column. I then walked on into Mafeking and reported to Major Pilson, Lord Cecil's chief staff officer, who advised me to go home and have a rest, which I did after paying off my Basutos and disbanding them. Sick, weary, and disgusted, I went home by train and arrived in Vryburg the evening of the day I left Mafeking.

As commandant at Vryburg I found Colonel

Galway of the Somersets, whom I had known in Pretoria prior to 1881, as adjutant of the old 13th. After having been home for about a week, I felt that I ought to be doing something, so decided to raise a corps of scouts, after getting permission from Lord Cecil, who was then in Cape Town, and to whom I wired for permission. His reply was as follows:—"Have no objection to your going into military service, providing military pay you." What he meant was that I could not expect to get paid by his office while doing military service. This, of course, I knew, and did not object to, but I felt that I should be doing something for the pay I considered I was receiving, although up to that time I had only received an advance of pay enough to pay current expenses. No rate of pay had up to that time been decided on for either my son or myself. My son had preceded me to Vryburg and was there a day or so before me.

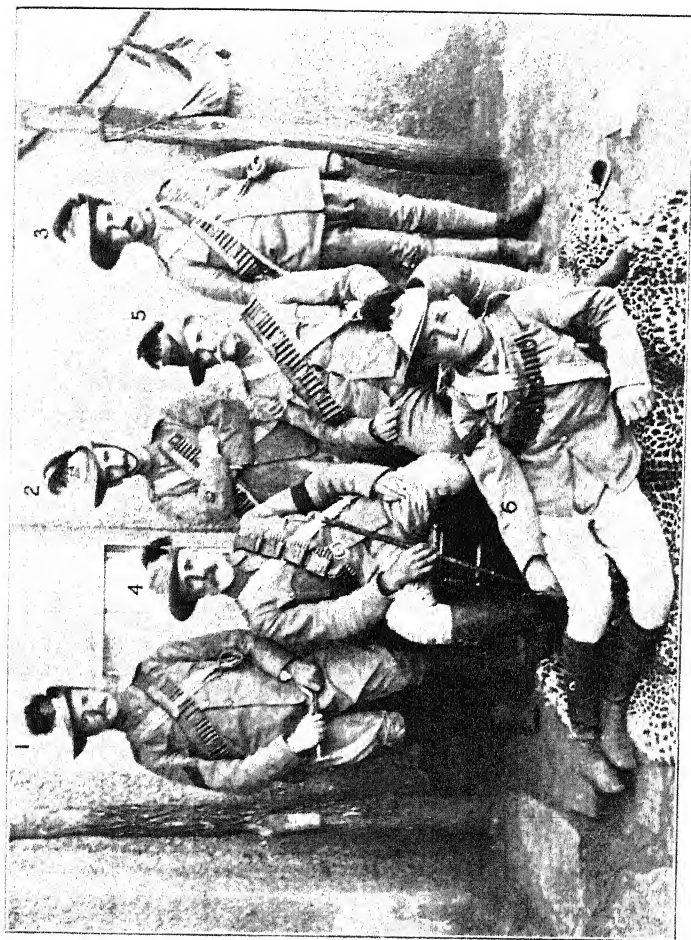
I had several conversations with Colonel Galway about raising the corps. He was highly in favour of my doing so, and on the arrival of Sir Charles Parsons, shortly before that of General Settle, the necessary order was given and I started raising the corps of fifty men, purely to act as scouts, which was a duty I knew well and in which I had had considerable practice in earlier wars.



## CHAPTER VII

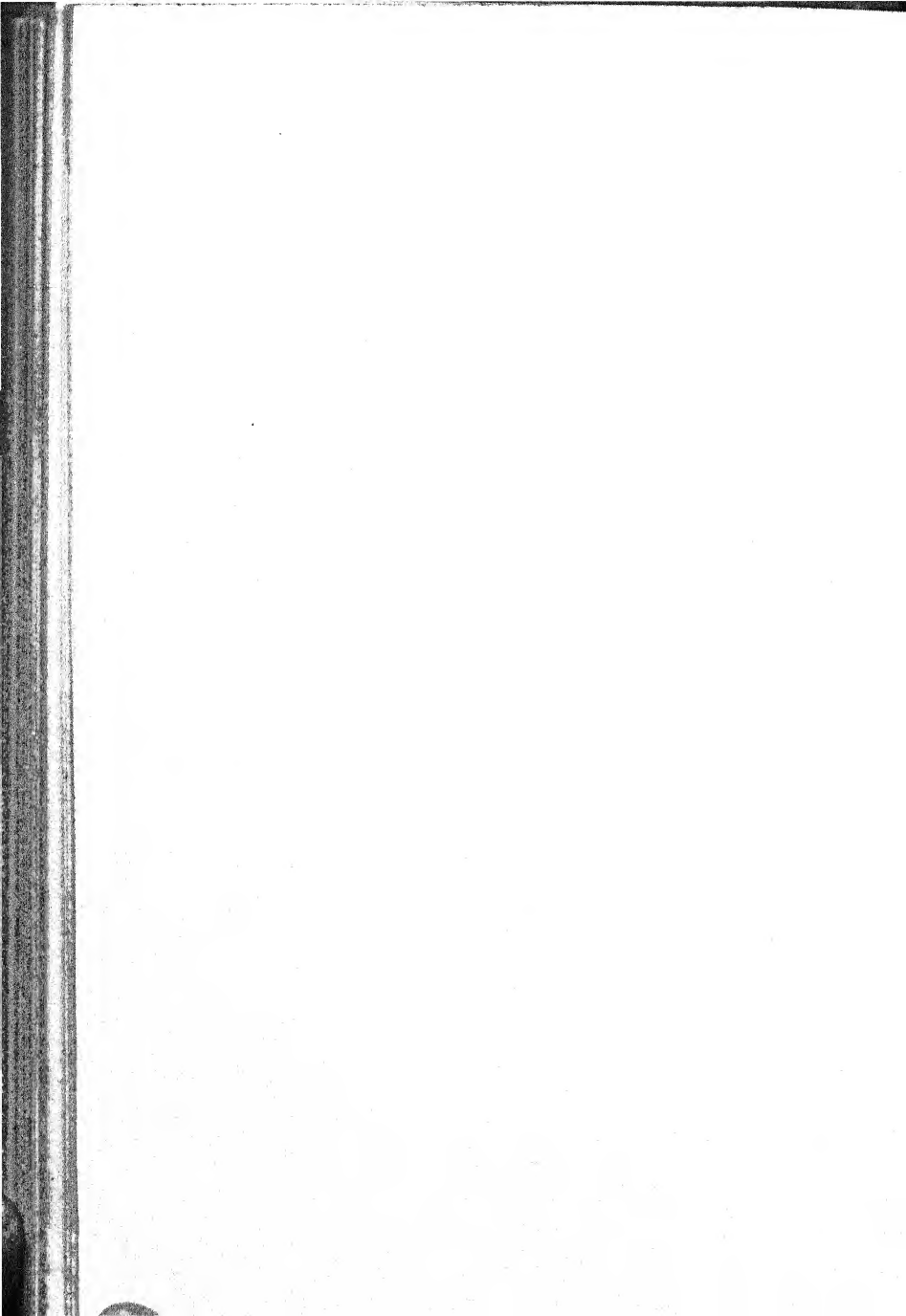
HAVING got the necessary order, as I have stated in the previous chapter, I set to work at once enrolling men, and in a short time had about the number wanted. James Streak, an old Grahams-town boy and a man on whom I could rely, was appointed as my lieutenant, my son Harry as quartermaster, and young Willie Staynes, son of our former Congregational minister here, as sergeant-major. The photo given is one taken, by the resident photographer, of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the first batch of scouts I raised in Vryburg.

I had barely got into working order when we received orders to accompany General Settle's column to Schweizer Reneke and onward on a circuitous campaign, spying out the land. We saw a lot of country, of the Transvaal some and also of Orange Free State; Boers, some also, but we had not lost any, someone said. I wondered what we had lost, as we were not finding much. At any rate the Boers found us on two or three occasions. Once when a portion of our convoy was left behind near the "Wey draai" (*i.e.* Turn away) on Vaal River, when they crept up close during the night and fired continuously into the camp, killing a number of the animals and wounding



OFFICERS AND N.C.O.'S. OF DENNISON'S SCOUTS WHEN FIRST RAISED

- |   |  |   |                        |
|---|--|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Sergeant W. Staynes (died of wounds, November, 1900) | 2 | Sergeant-Major Staynes |
| 3 | Quartermaster-Sergeant H. J. Dennison                | 4 | Captain Dennison       |
| 5 | Lieutenant J. Streak (killed November, 1900)         | 6 | Corporal Harvey Smith  |



several men; and the evening after fired into our camp, creating a deal of disturbance but not doing any particular harm. And again, on our return to Hoopstad by the same road, the Boers found us but too well. Of this, however, I will give an account anon.

After the night attack we marched on up the river towards Commando Drift on the Vaal. On a Sunday morning several Boers were noticed riding about on the opposite side of the river, and shortly after it was reported to me by Lieutenant Streak from the left flank of my screen that a laager was located on the river in the thorns, and that the Boers could plainly be heard singing. I at once reported back to Sir Charles Parsons, who was in command of the Mounted Brigade, and rode down to the left myself, when sure enough the Boers could be plainly heard singing, singing lustily—a Sunday service evidently. On returning to my centre I met Sir C. Parsons, who had ridden up on getting my report. We were then where the roads divided, one going parallel with the river, the other turning off to the right. I was ordered to take the right-hand road. No effort was made to attack the Boers. *Magnanimous reasons, perhaps!* I thought. But of course one *should not think sometimes*. We camped near a farm shortly after, and while away about two miles ahead with my men off-saddled, an orderly rode up with a note from Sir Charles, requesting me to come to camp. I immediately had my horse caught and saddled, then rode back to camp, where I met Sir Charles, who gave me orders to go on to Commando Drift and hold it until the column advanced, saying that I

should be supported by the C.M.R. (Cape Mounted Rifles), a good corps. I immediately returned to my men, and quickly saddled up and marched forward across the flats in my usual extended order; my front covered by my screen, which usually extended about three to four miles; the distance between two men of a half-section was always about 50 yards, and between each half-section about 300 yards. Thus four men covered a front of 400 yards, but in wooded or rugged country the men were much closer together. The screen was supported on either flank by the remainder of the corps riding in open skirmishing order, myself in the centre with a section of gallopers; besides which, individual scouts in advance were often used, and always connecting links in my front to the officers in charge of the screen.

Commando Drift was about eight or nine miles ahead. When we got to within about three miles of the drift, and near a farmhouse and some large rocks, I saw a column advancing towards the drift from the east, and shortly after saw a helio at work on us. I at once sent a man back with a note to Colonel Parsons, and placed my men and horses, whom I had concentrated on seeing the column, behind the rocks, which afforded safe cover against any description of fire, besides which I placed a picket on a rise on my right and a single look-out on another point of vantage, sending two of my most reliable men on to reconnoitre. Shortly afterwards I rode out towards the picket I had placed on the rise, when I saw my look-out galloping towards me gesticulating frantically. As he neared me I shouted, "What is the

matter?" "The Boers are coming round on our right rear, sir," he said, "about two hundred horsemen, galloping hard." And while he was still talking a drove of blesboks came over the rise from the direction indicated by the man. "There are your Boers," I said, "and the next time you come to report be sure you tell me what kind of horns the enemy carry. Go back to your post." But suddenly looking round I saw no supports, which had been advancing some distance behind us a short time before, nor yet the dust of the artillery that should have followed an hour after us with Sir C. Parsons, and which I had also noticed far behind us on the long bare flat before we took cover. "What has become of the supports and the guns?" I asked the man. "Gone back, sir," he said, "some time ago." "Well, here's a mess," I thought, but said nothing. I returned to my men, and on looking through my glasses at the column in our front, could plainly see the guns being unlimbered, evidently to open fire on us, but immediately limbered up again. Knowing that De Wet was not far off, I thought perhaps it was his commando; but, to my relief, my two men returned and reported having come in touch with Australian scouts, and that the column was that of Colonel Porter and a portion of General Hunter's column, which we were to meet at Bothasville. I rode forward at once with my party and met Colonel Porter, to whom I explained matters, on which a hearty laugh followed. I asked him what I should do. He said, "Oh, camp where you think fit, but I should suggest beyond me on the river as the best place for you. I

saluted, and we rode on and camped about where Colonel Porter had shown me. I forgot to state that he said, "You know, I was just about putting my guns on to you when I heard who you were." I said, "Yes, I saw it; but we were quite safe." "You scouts are cool customers," one of the staff remarked as he rode a short way with me. "Supposing this column had been De Wet's instead of ours, what would you have done?" "Stayed where I was," I replied, "and done my best. I had no orders to retire." But I did not feel at peace with everyone that evening. Colonel Porter kindly sent me word to draw provisions, which I did, for we had none. About eight p.m. I heard that Colonel Parsons had arrived, but I did not see him until the next morning. I got orders to start work with him at six the next morning. Nothing of any importance occurred beyond some straggling shots at the outposts, and the next morning, just at dawn, we saddled up and rode to Colonel Porter's camp, and after waiting for some time for Colonel Parsons, we started back to rejoin the column.

We returned the way we had come, towards Hoopstad, and on arriving at "Wey draai" again camped there, after passing the site of the camp that had been attacked, and where the remains of many cattle and horses lay stinking in the open veld. Boers were seen galloping about on the opposite side of the river, and firing from the bush lining the northern bank was frequent. Colonel Porter had told me that De Wet was in the vicinity, and the actions of the Boers gave one the idea that someone was in com-

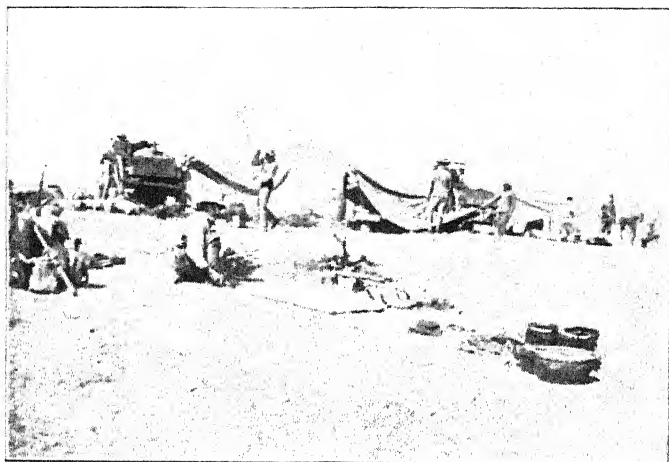
mand whom they trusted; their actions were bold, and not as usual. Colonel Parsons' two horses had been sent to water, and, becoming frightened at our maxim fire, got away from the native who had them in charge, and stampeded past one of my pickets, who turned them towards the river. A Boer was seen to drive them away and they were not recovered again. Another who was coming through the river, ostensibly to surrender, was shot by our maxim fire and died at the farmhouse at "Wey draai" the next day.

I repeatedly approached Sir Charles Parsons, asking that we (the mounted forces) might be allowed to cross and attack the Boers, but was informed that the General would not allow it. The following day, while dozing under my screen (we had no tents), I heard mounting orders given, and looking out from under the screen I saw Major Berrange of the Cape Police mounting some of his men. I went to him at once and asked where he was going. He said, "Down the river." "What!" I replied, "with eighty men only?" He said, "Yes, and two maxims." "Well, then, I will try and go with you," I said. I immediately went to Sir Charles Parsons' tent and asked him if I might accompany Berrange with my scouts. He said, "No, I cannot spare the scouts, for we are marching shortly for Hoopstad." I was persistent, and at last he said, "You may send half of your men." I said, "Thank you, sir," and immediately had eleven horses saddled and my own, taking some of my best men. I only had about twenty-five horses fit for service.

We had barely gone four miles from camp when I



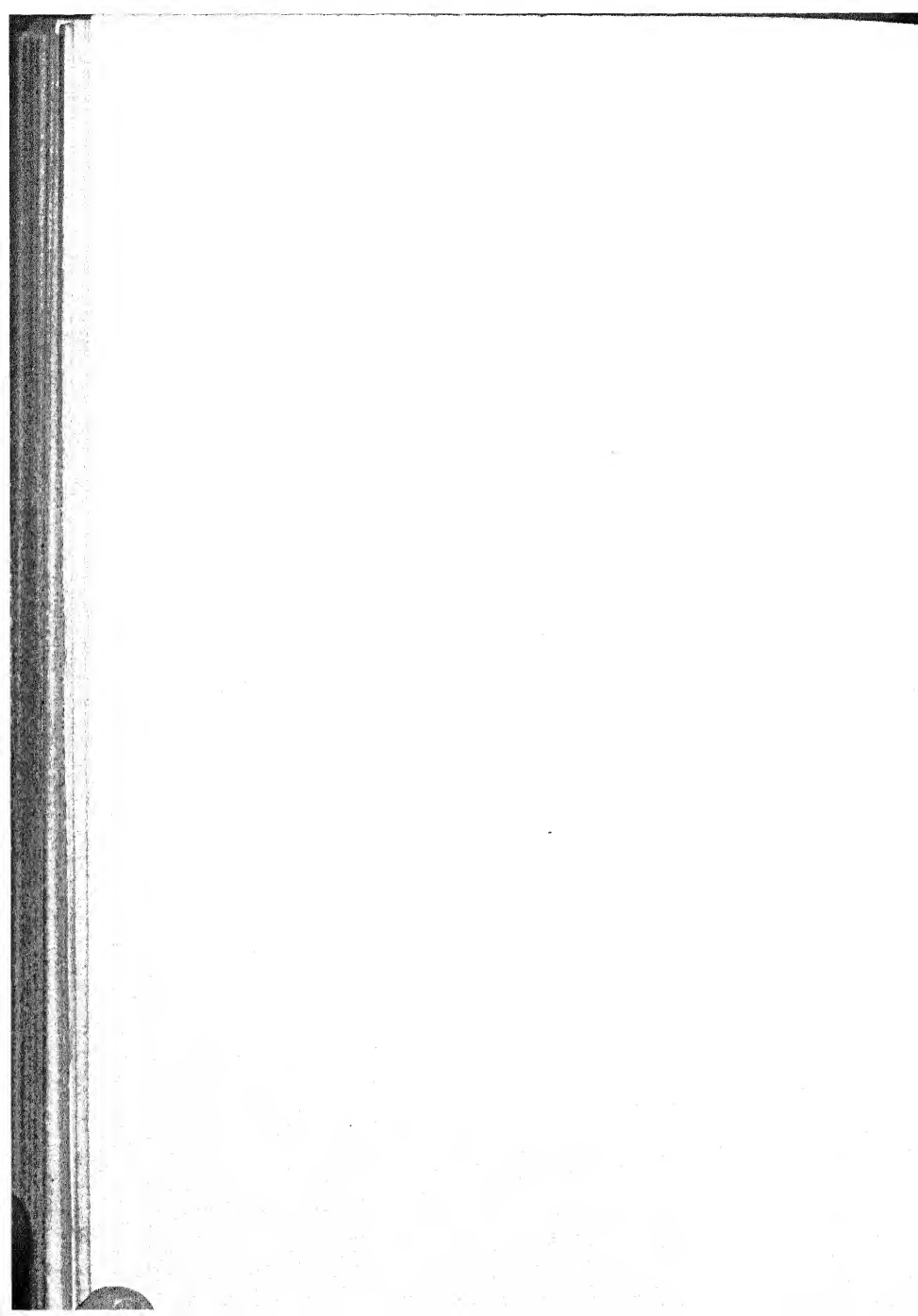
was fired on from the river bank opposite; one of the C. P. maxims opened on them and stopped their fire. We proceeded down the river for about another three or four miles, and crossed a peninsula running into an abrupt bend of the river; in the distance we could see a number of Boers coming up the river on the off side at full speed. Berrange had just ridden up, and I pointed out the Boers to him. A few horsemen had galloped away from a farmhouse on our left front. "We turn here," said Berrange; "this, my guide tells me, is the place indicated as our turning-point." "Very good," I replied, "and in that case I shall scout through that brushwood," now on our right as we were turning to the left towards Hoopstad. I pointed to where the few Boers had ridden from, and taking the right flank of the screen (leaving the left in charge of Sergt.-Major Staynes to scout for Major Berrange), consisting of five men, including a non-commissioned officer, I galloped towards the farmhouse in the brushwood, and found that a party of Boers had been camped there. I then turned to the left to join my centre, and when within about 500 or 600 yards from Berrange and his men, heard firing and saw confusion among the Cape Police. We galloped up, and dismounting behind a bush I went back with my handful of men on foot (our horses were meanwhile with my servant—a Hottentot). Riderless horses passed us again and again, as well as animals. I saw Major Berrange doing his best to stop the panic, but at last he gave up the vain attempt. Some of the best men had taken what cover the country afforded, a few scattered



DENNISON'S SCOUTS  
Officers' quarters on line of march



A SQUADRON, DENNISON'S SCOUTS



camel thorn trees and ant-heaps, that were in the vicinity, being the only cover. The game was up. One of the maxims was already in the hands of the enemy; the other, with a wounded horse and one wounded man, had gone forward. I sent my men back to get their horses and to send me mine, which my boy brought, and, as the men mounted, I ordered them to clear, for the Boers were advancing rapidly on us, firing from their horses. As my servant handed me the reins of my horse, I shouted to him to go and I would follow. I threw the reins over the animal's neck and tried to mount, but the horse was panic-stricken and would not allow me to mount. The bullets were cutting up the sand thick and fast around me. I felt that my time had come, when suddenly Sergt.-Major Sheppard of the Cape Police rode up and, hastily catching hold of my horse's reins, said, "Mount captain; I will hold him." This saved me, and barely had I swung myself into the saddle when the horse put down his head and bolted all he knew. Sheppard had saved me! and this was the second gallant act of his that day, for I later on met Major Maloney, C.S.O. to General Settle, whom I informed of Sheppard's brave act. He said that early in the day Sheppard had acted in a way worthy of mention, and asked me to write reporting the matter, and request mention for him, and that he (Major Maloney) would endorse it. I did so, but up to the time I am writing, now two years after the event, this gallant non-commissioned officer has never been recognised.

After some considerable difficulty I succeeded in

quieting my horse a bit as I reached the remaining maxim, in charge of Lieutenant Davison, of the Cape Police, who could get no further with the wounded horse. We were, later on, met by reliefs from the column, and got to camp at Hoopstad about ten p.m. Our losses were considerable in deaths, wounded, and prisoners. Among the former was young Grant, of the Cape Mounted Rifles, who, with some more of that force, had joined shortly before the firing began, but of which I was not aware at the time; and among the latter was Sergeant-Major Ball of the Cape Police, one of the best and a general favourite. Ball earned the V.C. at Carter's Ride during the siege of Kimberley by carrying out a wounded man, but the act was not recognised. (All the prisoners were released later and returned to Kimberley.) Several wounded were left on the field and brought in later by our ambulance.

It appears that Major Berrange had sent Captain Harvey, C.P.D.I., round the promontory I mentioned in the bend of the river, and, later, noticing the men advancing in his rear, had taken them for Harvey's men, and was not aware of any enemy close until fired on from the rear. Harvey and his men had ridden into a trap and all been captured.

I give the details as they occurred. My readers can judge for themselves, but I cannot refrain from saying that, having a large available force at his command, General Settle might have sent a stronger force down the river, knowing that the Boers were about in considerable strength. But this is only another and *minor* error of judgment.

The following day we marched on towards Boshoff, which we reached a few days later. (I cannot give exact time or dates, as a great portion of my diary got lost during the war, and I have to trust to my memory. The details of my story are correct, but I must omit dates.)

On leaving Boshoff, General Settle rode up to the head of the column to me, and after conversing for a short time he said, "Now, Dennison, you are going with Sir Charles Parsons and the rest of the Mounted Brigade, and I trust you will have fighting enough to suit you. I shall follow later. Good-bye, I wish you lots of luck," and, shaking hands with me, he returned to Boshoff while we proceeded on to Modder River and convoyed supplies to Koffyfontein Diamond Mine, which was garrisoned by some troops and held throughout the war. On our return Sir Charles rode ahead to Honey Nest Kloof railway station, and proceeded to Kimberley by train. We met him a few days later at Honey Nest Kloof station, from which place all the mounted proceeded to Kimberley, excepting my corps, who proceeded to Vryburg. On our arrival there I reported to the commandant in charge, who said he had no orders about us. I wrote to headquarters, Kimberley, and also to Captain White, of the Cape Police, who had been acting S.O. to Sir Charles Parsons, inquiring what we had to do, and after waiting some time I got orders to remain where I was for the present. Colonel Milne—commonly called "Lyddite," on account of his violent temper—was in command of Vryburg. I was informed by him that we were shortly to proceed to

Schweizer Reneke to convoy provision waggons, and that he himself was going in command.

We left Vryburg in November, 1900, for Schweizer Reneke with a convoy of 140 ox and donkey waggons, escorted by 300 of the Welsh Regiment, K.O.S.B., and a half squadron of Imperial Yeomanry, less than half a squadron of Australian Bushmen under Lieutenant McPherson, a gallant lad, and of my own scouts about twenty-seven men; Colonel Milne in command, with Captain Taylor, of the Welsh Regiment, as S.O.; Captain Anthill, of the Australians, with one 15-pounder and the gun guard; Captain Robert Hannay (an elder brother of Angus Hannay, who was with me in the capture of the Chief Galishwe, of Langeberg fame, and who was mainly instrumental in the capture of the chief; both were friends of mine, as our fathers had been friends of yore in lower Albany, in the Cape Colony, near Grahamstown) was guide and transport officer; Jeff McBeth, a brave and able young man, who afterwards did good service as second in command of Cullinan's Horse, was in charge of captured stock—or stock to be captured.

On our arrival at O'Reilly's Pan (so named after an old hunter, Jack O'Reilly), about thirteen miles from Vryburg, we made our first halt, had breakfast and camped for the night.

Early the next morning we started on, the scouts well in advance, and on nearing O'Reilly's Kop, a few miles beyond the Pan, firing commenced on my left. The Boers, about sixty in number, cleared as I brought my right screen flank round, and retired

down the flat, hastened by the shells of our 15-pounder. With the scouts I advanced at a gallop and drove the Boers on. We camped at New Grennan, Hannay's farm, then moved on again to Peto's (a Frenchman) farm, where some outhouses were burnt by order of Sir C. Parsons on our former trip. We remained at Peto's that night, and moved on early the next morning to William Pretorius' farm, where we camped until about two p.m., and then resumed our march. Barely had we got a few miles from our camping ground when my right flank was fired on, but as the supports came up the enemy retired. Constant sniping continued without any casualties on our side, until we got on the top of the rise, where I called a halt for the convoy to get nearer. I then suggested to Colonel Milne that we should push on as fast as possible, as I feared the Boers would try and stop us at Koppies Dam, and it was getting late. This was done, getting the waggons two and three abreast where it could be done. I sent on two of my most reliable men to reconnoitre and report on Koppies Dam if possible. We halted for a short time until McFarlane and Seaward—the two men I had sent on—returned. They reported that Koppies Dam, now about three miles ahead, was held by a large number of Boers, as also the ridges on either side. Besides Robert Hannay and myself, who both knew the country well, we had one Terblanche, a loyal Boer, with us, and who had temporarily joined my scouts. This man suggested taking a road leading past the left of Koppies Dam. I recommended taking this road, to which Colonel



Milne at first objected, but finally agreed to take. On nearing the hill on the left of Koppies Dam, Lieutenant Streak reported that about 200 Boers had just gone into it from the north; more reinforcements! I saw that we should have to avoid this hill by leaving the road we were on and striking across the veld, the fire by this time becoming hot.

I rode on and found that there was nothing to prevent our crossing the veld; the ground was hard and but few stones, and no sluits. The colonel objected most strongly, but I pointed out to him that we had the convoy to consider, and that the road we were on went within a hundred yards of the hill I have mentioned. At last he agreed, saying, "Very well, do as you think best."

I had sent word by my galloper, a few minutes before speaking to the colonel, to Sergeant-Major Staynes, who was in charge of the right screen flank, to close on the centre, leaving a few flankers out, but not to advance until they got orders. By some mistake or other poor Staynes did not get the order, and continued to advance towards the hill, with the result that he fell mortally wounded, and was got out later under a heavy fire by our surgeon, Doctor Ellis, who acted most pluckily, as the Boers fired on him and the party conveying the wounded man out the whole way to where we were camped, under the ridges at a farmhouse away to the left. One wheel of the waggon came off, but was galloped into camp. As it was, the fire was too hot to delay. Colonel Milne left me practically to do as I thought best, so I had the waggons turned to the left, while Streak

with nine men, whom I had sent, took possession of one of the ridges as some Boers, about fifty or sixty, got possession of the one immediately behind the farmhouse. I asked Anthill to put some shells on the koppie the Boers had got into, while I charged the spot with about a dozen men. We thus got possession of both positions, and camped the waggons in very close order in front of the house. The action of Dr. Ellis deserved recognition, and I trust he has got the well-merited distinction of the V.C. We had foiled the Boers at their own game, and the convoy was saved. Great assistance was rendered by Hannay, McBeth, and Captain Taylor, W.R., in fact, all hands did their best. Especially I must mention the Australian Bushmen and Lieutenant McPherson, their leader. Of my own handful of scouts I cannot speak too highly; both officers and men did their duty, including my son Harry, who always showed cool pluck in danger, and who was quartermaster-sergeant at the time.

Every precaution was taken against night attack. On one ridge to the east of the camp some infantry were placed as night pickets; but as it was too long for them to defend, I left Streak with his men there with orders to remain until dark and then to fall back to camp. By this means the Boers were led to think we held the whole of the ridge. Streak and his men were wanted elsewhere.

The next morning before sunrise we marched onward, and struck the main road *viâ* Koppies Dam about one and a half miles off; we had, by crossing the veld the evening before, really saved in distance,

as the road described the half side of a square and we had cut off the angle. From ridge to ridge the Boers opposed us, but always gave way as we advanced on them. The long front of screen was too much for the Boers, there was always the danger of being outflanked, and individual men were poor targets, for my screen rode in very widely extended order.

After camping that night on M. Pretorius' farm, we arrived the next day at our destination without any further mishap, although the Boers showed up in fairly strong numbers. Poor Staynes died the day after our arrival at Schweizer Reneke. By his death I lost one of my bravest and best lads. He was buried with full military honours. The day following, we started on our return march to Vryburg, taking the upper, or northern road, not the one by which we had come, and the next day captured a considerable number of stock, cattle, sheep, and goats.

As we had to bring out some families from near New Grennan—R. Hannay's farm—one of which was that of Terblanche, whom I have already mentioned, we diverged to the left and went towards New Grennan on to the road we had come by. As we neared Losasa, the stream on which New Grennan is situated, Boers were seen riding about in the distance, usually a sign that a force is not far off. We camped for the night on the Losasa, and the next morning continued our march and reached Terblanche's farm about sunrise, where the families were we had to bring out. They were hastily placed

in our waggons, and in the meantime, during the halt, I had ordered Streak to advance, supported by the Yeomanry, and secure the positions on the ridge facing New Grennan farm. Shortly after he left I heard heavy and continued firing, and on immediately galloping forward was met by one of Streak's men, who said that his officer and several others had fallen in the advance to the ridge. The gun was quickly brought forward and opened fire on the Boers, and under cover of the fire I took the position. We found poor Streak lying riddled with bullets and picked up three other men wounded besides. Streak died as the doctor, who had accompanied me, turned him over; he was lying on his face. Another of my best and bravest gone! It seems the Boers saw him advancing and waited until he got to within thirty paces of the "Schanses" (fortifications)—they had hastily built rough stone walls about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet high as they saw us advancing—and then fired on our men, who were not supported as they should have been. I felt bitter, hard, and wished for a stronger force.

After placing my pickets in the best positions, I went back to the waggons which had camped at the farmhouse. We buried poor Streak in the little graveyard on the farm, where lay the remains of Robert Hannay's father and uncle. The other men were seriously, but not mortally, wounded. After a short halt, only allowing time for the burial and for breakfast, we moved on—or rather the convoy did—after the advance guard of Yeomanry, while I got the men out from their positions on the ridge under cover of the gun. On rejoining the convoy I found it

halted on the top of the rise, and the ridges held on our front and left by a strong force of Boers. I found Colonel Milne near the gun, and got orders from him to try and dislodge the Boers on the ridge on the left; and barely had I got my men—a detachment of Yeomanry, Australian Bushmen, and scouts—ready for the advance on the rear of the ridge, when I noticed that we had no protection on our right, and at once sent a sergeant and twelve men—six scouts and six Yeomanry—to take up a position on the right flank, which a slight rise afforded. I waited a few minutes and saw the men swerve and go to cover at some old Kaffir huts—or rather the walls of them, as they had all been burnt by the Boers—near the waggons, where several others from the waggons had also taken cover. Then putting spurs into the flanks of my always willing and swift pony, I galloped across under a heavy fire all the way from the left ridge and turned the men out to the position I wanted them in. As I turned to go back to my men my horse shied, and as I drew him tight by the reins, felt that I was hit in the elbow. The ambulance was close by, so I rode over and dismounted. The doctor and assistants were dressing some wounded. My coat-sleeve was quickly ripped open and the wound bandaged by the able and willing doctor, of whom I shall ever think kindly, for he was a good man. When the bandaging was finished I turned towards my horse to mount, but was stopped by the doctor and made to sit down. A faintness came over me, and I felt that I was no good any more that day. Colonel Milne and

Robert Hannay shortly after came up. I suggested to the Colonel to strike away across the flat eastwards well out of fire from the ridges, for our force was too small to attack them and defend the convoy as well; in fact, I often think that it was as well that I was hit and thus the attack on the left prevented. Otherwise it might have gone badly with us, for, as it proved later, we might have been cut off, and that would have given our enemy the opportunity they wanted.

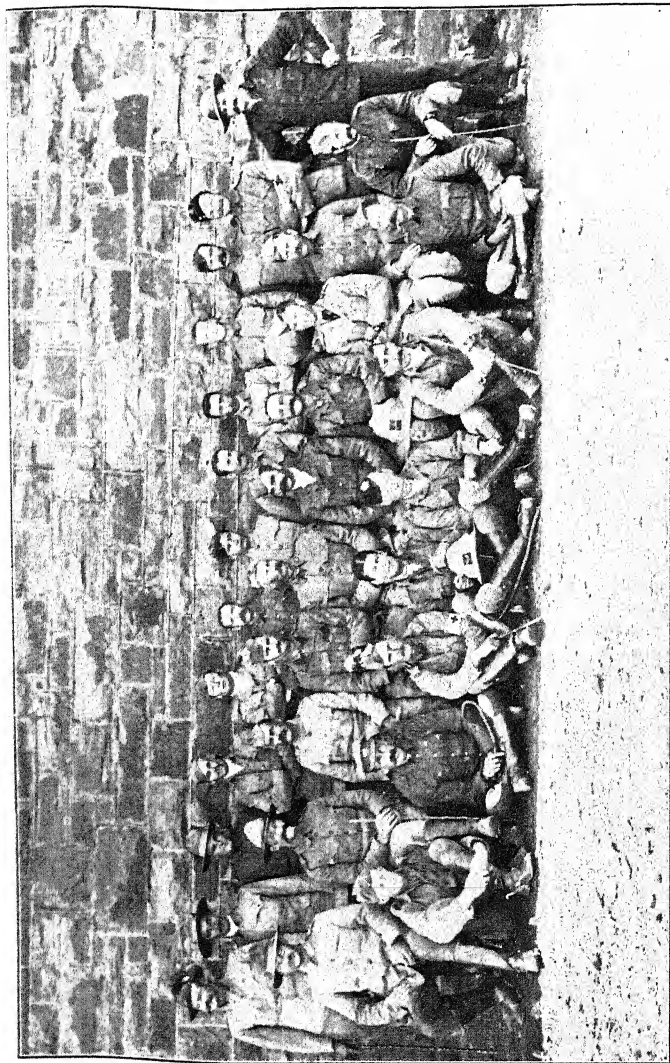
My suggestion was acted on, and the direction of our course was changed. Again a disaster averted, for the Boers would not venture on to the open flats. As I have said, the course was changed east across the open flats, and then we inclined slightly to the west and camped in a large dry dam at a farmhouse near O'Reilly's Pan, from whence that night I sent two of my scouts to Vryburg—acting on the orders of Colonel Milne—for reinforcements. We knew the Boer force to be strong—as they themselves stated about 800 men—whereas we had only about 200 mounted men all told, and about 250 infantry, while our big gun ammunition was expended, on which so much depended, for Captain Anthill worked his gun well, and without him and his gun we should have fared badly. Our total loss was five killed and fifteen wounded; no prisoners.

The next morning just at daylight we moved on again away into the flats round the Pan, and barely had we moved a mile from our camping ground when we saw in the distance our relief force advancing from Vryburg, among whom was my late eldest son

Alec. Later on, as we neared the town, my wife and daughter met me in a trap, into which I got and drove with them into Vryburg.

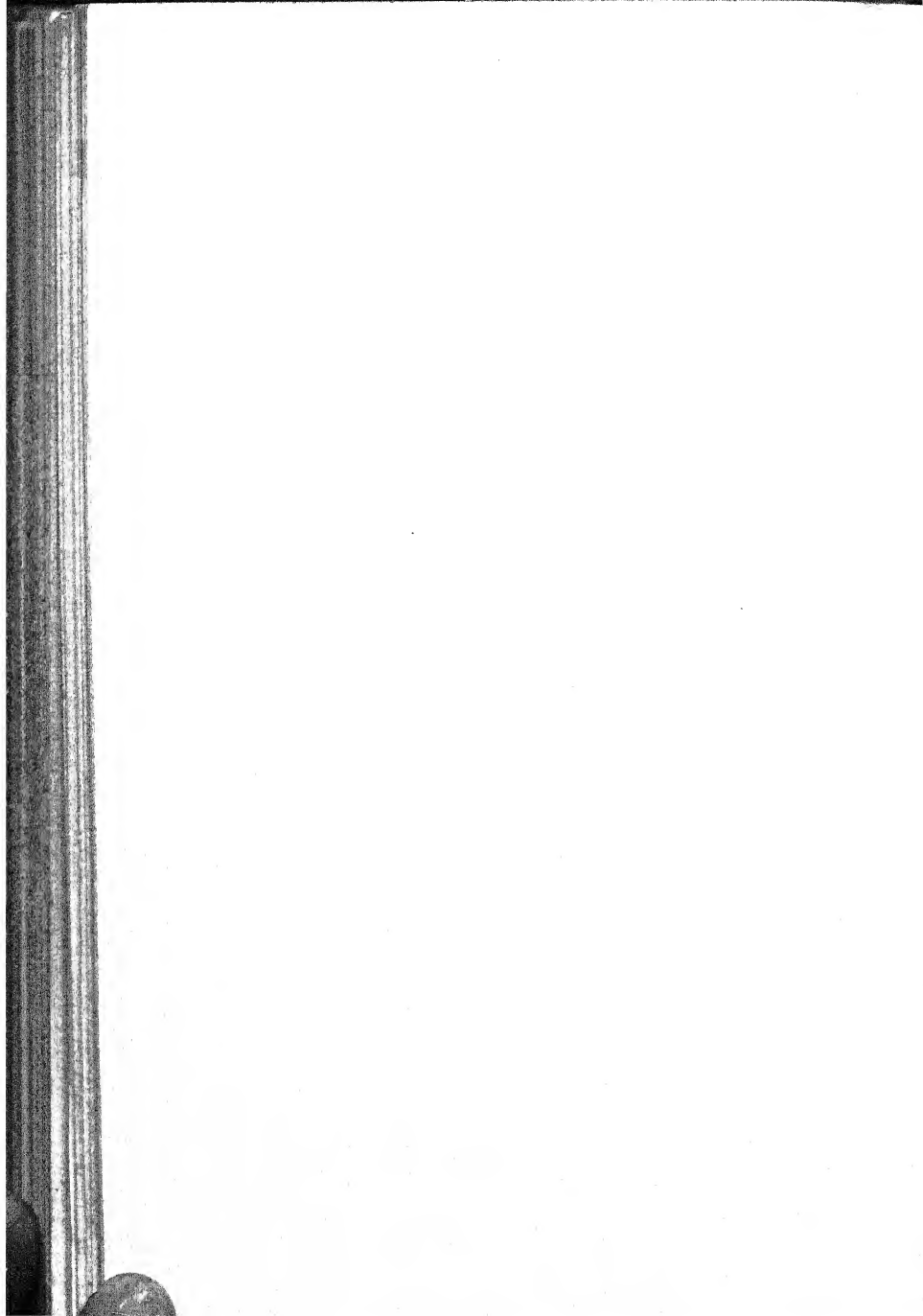
My wound proved not so serious as was anticipated, but very painful. However, in the course of about three weeks I was fit again.

I cannot here refrain from saying that, whatever may have been the faults of Colonel Milne, he was at least a brave man, and one who had the sense—so much wanting in the war among so many commanding officers I knew—to take advice from others who knew the country and Boer modes of fighting better than he did. I always liked Colonel Milne and could get on with him. He was, at any rate, a *soldier*.



GROUP OF OFFICERS OF THE KIMBERLEY COLUMN





## CHAPTER VIII

AFTER remaining in Vryburg about a month I was ordered to proceed to Kimberley, and there we formed the nucleus of the Kimberley column. Again, under Colonel Milne, we started for Boshoff with a large convoy, but with a considerably stronger force than our former one. Our mounted force consisted of 50th Company Hampshire Imperial Yeomanry, under Captain Nicholson, a squadron of the Diamond Fields Horse, and my own corps; now 175 men, as I had got authority to raise the force of scouts to 200 men, and had some excellent officers in H. P. Browne (my son-in-law, seconded from the Cape Police and now my adjutant and second in command with the rank of captain, an efficient and good officer), Watty Brunton, and Herbert Brown, both Colonial boys and excellent officers. Herbert Brown I made screen leader, and he became one of the smartest officers I had. The whole force was good and I was justly proud of my scouts. Brunton was a most plucky and good officer and did a lot of really good work.

Besides the mounted men, we had 300 infantry. Our artillery consisted of two 15-pounders, under Major Paris of the Royal Marine Artillery Force. One of the officers who served with him was Lieutenant Nesham, who had also been with us on General

Settle's column. Nesham was a fine and brave young English officer of the right stamp. We also had two pom-poms, in charge of Lieutenant Kennaway, R.F.A., C Squadron, 5th N.Z.

Besides a number of ox and mule waggons, numbering, if I recollect rightly, all told about 130, we had traction engines with their loaded trucks. After leaving Kimberley we camped at a farm on the Frankfort road, which about six miles ahead wound through a narrow and most dangerous pass in the hills, and which could be defended by a small force against large numbers. We were waiting for the traction engines and their trains.

The next morning, after our arrival at the farm I have mentioned, a white man (Englishman) turned up on foot—having come from Boshoff—and stated that the Boers, about 200, under Jacobs, were waiting for us at Frankfort Pass, and that he had escaped during the night, and the Boers had taken his cart, horses, and money. Later in the day we had positive information through our Intelligence that the pass was held by the Boers in strong force.

I had had breakfast with Colonel Milne and Captain Gorton, his staff officer, and the advisability of going *via* Frankfort was discussed. I gave it as my opinion that we should have great difficulty in getting through the pass, if we got through at all, providing Jacobs with his commando were there. Colonel Milne would not hear of taking the other and more northerly road over Slabbert's Nek, and which we knew was easier to attack if held than Frankfort Pass. I shortly after went to my camp,

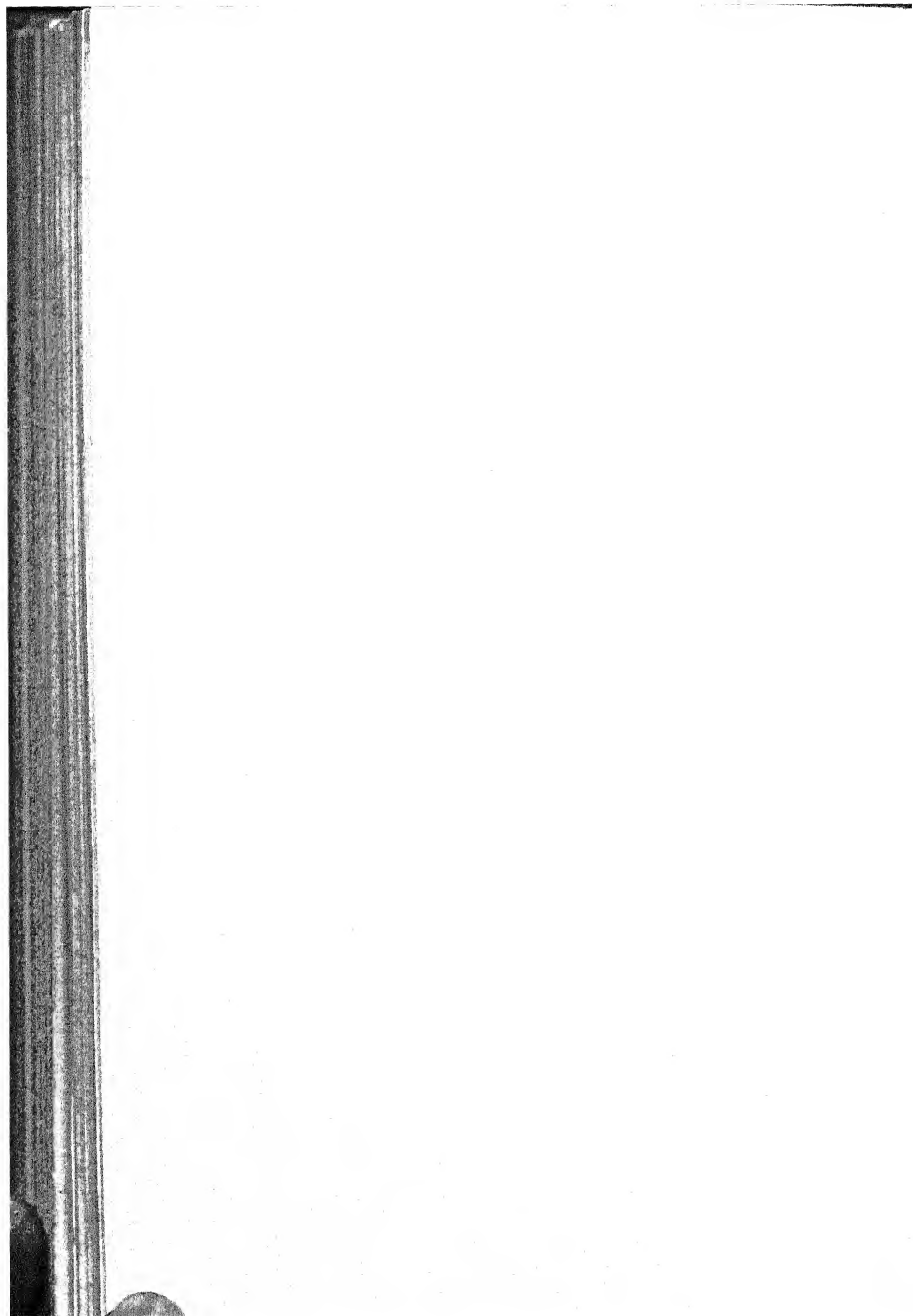


LIEUTENANT HERBERT BROWN,  
Screen leader of Dennison's Scouts



PACK DRILL.

A trooper of Dennison's Scouts punished for cruelty to his horse



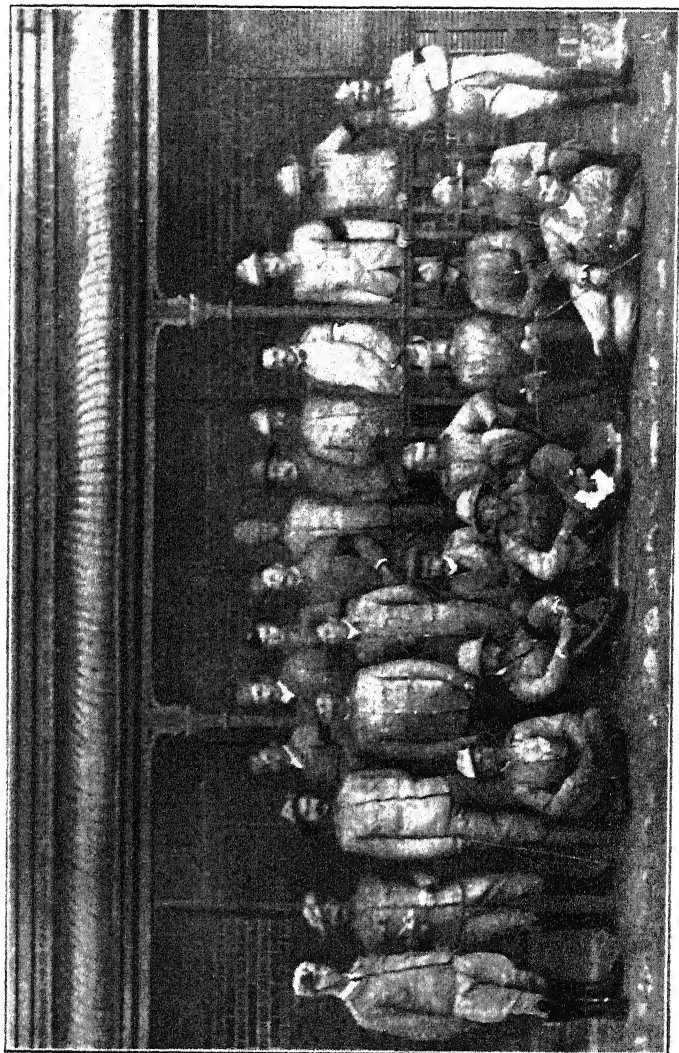
and later in the day, after hearing that the Boers held Frankfort, I again went to the colonel's tent, being determined that we should avoid the pass, if I could do anything towards it. I knew that I had the sympathy of all the other officers, besides which I had a plan to suggest. I met Colonel Milne at his tent and found him in a good humour and most cordial, as he was to me as a rule.

After talking for a time I said, "Colonel, I have a plan to suggest to you." "All right," he replied, "what is it?" "It is this," I replied. "We know that Frankfort Pass is held by the Boers in strong force; we know also that the traction engines cannot go *viâ* Slabbert's Nek on account of the heavy sand, but the waggons can. Now, if you will allow me, I will start within an hour and hold Slabbert's Nek; I shall ride hard, and you allow our waggon transport, in fact our whole column, excepting the traction engines, to follow half an hour later. The Boers, seeing the column changing course, will make for the Nek, but I shall be there before them. We can thus get our convoy of waggons through to Slabbert's Farm, and I can go and hold Frankfort while the traction trains get through, by starting to-night at two o'clock." "I agree with your plan," he replied, "start away as soon as you like." I did so, and was completely successful. Major Paris with his guns accompanied me to the pass. We got everything safely through without firing a shot. The Boers were foiled again.

They made for Slabbert's Nek, leaving the Frankfort position on seeing the column taking that road,

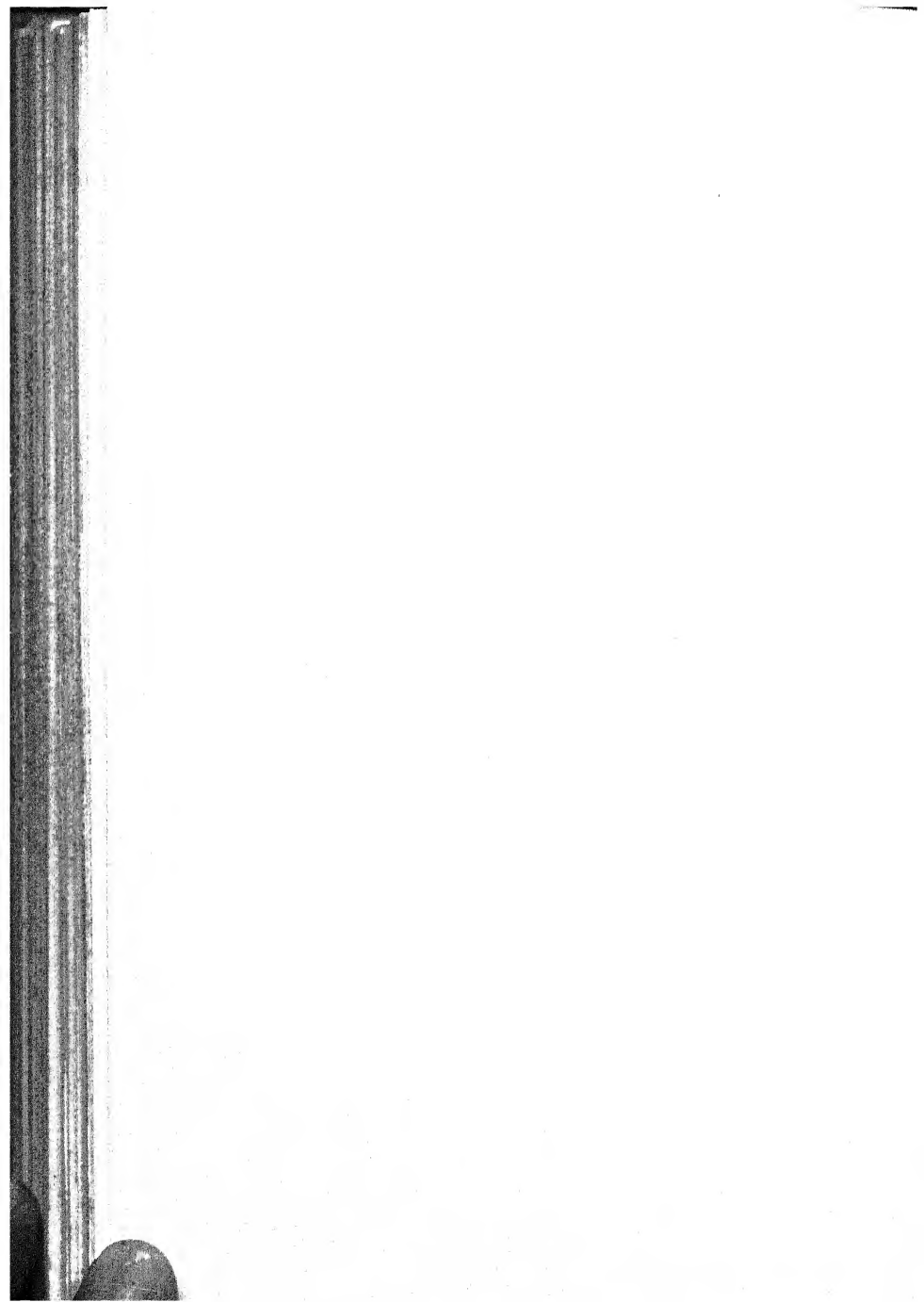
but we had forestalled them, and a few long range shots sent them back. The traction engines were cursed by us all, as they were constantly requiring water, which was by no means plentiful, and it took us until three o'clock the next morning to reach camp with them.

The morning following we started about five o'clock, and, as we neared the hills in our front, Boers were reported in strength holding the hills on either side of the road, which passed through between them at an easy rifle range from both sides. I at once pushed on, and when within 800 yards from the entrance, fire was opened on us from the hills. On the left was Lieutenant Brunton, and the right under command of Lieutenant H. Brown. Both left and right flanks dismounted and sent their horses back, then advanced in our usual style, each man acting independently, running forward a short distance then falling flat. I had trained my men to this mode of advance, as a man lying flat offers but a poor mark to the enemy, even if lying on the bare ground, and is barely visible at 700 or 800 yards, more especially so being in very open order. Our artillery opened fire on the ridges, and the scouts steadily advanced. On the right they were supported by Sir R. Rycroft with a body of Imperial Yeomanry, and who acted well. Rycroft was a good man, and most eager to learn. The left, under a young subaltern—I forget his name—did not seem to grasp what they had to do, and it was only when Brunton and his men got to the hill in their front that any advance was made by the left Yeomanry supports, who then madly



OFFICERS OF KIMBERLEY COLUMN





charged forward past Brunton's right until checked by a heavy fire from the Boers, who had taken up a position further on, and who shot—if I remember rightly—seven of the Yeomanry horses; the balance with their riders came as madly back. And this was often the case with some of the Yeomanry detachments we had at times with us. They would wildly charge forward, and, of course, when fire was suddenly and unexpectedly opened upon them, it was difficult to prevent the fear-stricken animals they rode from turning and galloping frantically away from danger.

Both positions were soon in our hands, and our convoys got safely through. Near the Nek, not far from Boshoff, we were met by the commandant and some mounted men. Among the latter was one of my old Border Horse troopers of 1879, Archer by name, one of the seven who escaped with me on the fatal Zlobanne day in Zululand, and a man who that day under my own personal observation earned the V.C., and I was informed that near Boshoff he had saved the life of an officer under very heavy fire. He was not rewarded. This same man later served with me to the end of this last war, always a willing, active, and good soldier.

The day after the stores were all safely delivered at Boshoff, I was informed that we should start on our return on the morning following, but about five p.m. I was hurriedly sent for by Colonel Milne, and went down at once to see him. I met him coming round a corner on horseback. "Glad to see you, Dennison," he said, as I saluted him. "I was just riding up to

see you. You got my note?" "Yes, sir," I replied, "and came at once." "Oh! it is all right," he replied, "but as my man had brought my horse, I thought I would ride up and save you the trouble of coming to see me. It seems," he continued, "that the commandant here cannot send a party of infantry to hold the Nek to-night—in fact, the Boers are now in possession—and I want you to go at once and drive them out, and hold till we pass in the morning with the convoy. The Boshoff guns have just gone out to shell the ridges, and the Boshoff infantry are to act as your supports, and all take orders from you." "Very good, sir," I replied, and, turning to my orderly, gave him a message to the officer in charge of camp. After talking to the colonel a minute or two longer, I rode up to my camp and found all hands busy saddling up; my order had been at once obeyed, and within ten minutes we started; our waggons and camp equipment were to follow on with the convoy in the morning. I found the guns and infantry awaiting me outside, and met the commandant, who, on shaking hands, said he thought we had a risky job to perform. "And now," said he, "you can direct the officers in charge of the guns as to the shelling. I wish you every success, good-bye." We again shook hands, and I rode over to the guns and directed the officers in charge as to the shelling, which, as soon as my men had got clear in front, was commenced.

We advanced rapidly in our usual very extended order, screen and supports, the infantry following on either flank in open skirmishing order. I rode in the

centre in a line with my supports (the usual position of the officer commanding scouts). The shells from the two guns kept bursting along the ridge until I sent word back to cease firing as I neared the ridge. The Boers opened fire on the left from the ridge, but, being now quite dark, the fire was at random. My men, who had dismounted, crept cautiously but quickly on, then, at the foot of the ridge, with a cheer, rushed in, and the Boers fled; on the right, as the men were able to outflank the position thoroughly, the Boers left it without firing a shot. The position was gained without a casualty. The infantry came up shortly after, and we held the ridge until the convoy passed next morning, ere the sun rose, and reached Kimberley a few days later.

## CHAPTER IX

FROM all sources we heard of train-wrecking, capture of convoys and men by the Boers. De Wet, the will-o'-the-wisp, the man who might have been caught again and again were it not for that curse of the British Army, jealousy. Why was he allowed to escape at Oliphant's Nek, when the patient, untiring Lord Methuen drove him on to that Nek? Where was the much-fêted General? Certainly not at that Nek, where he should have been. Why did De Wet escape so often? Because of jealousy and incapacity. Why were the Colonials never given a chance of attempting the capture independently? Because the military authorities knew too well that the Colonials might catch De Wet, and the Imperial regular troops would get no kudos. Had a few columns of combined Colonial forces, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and South Africans, under their own officers, been given the work to do, De Wet would have been caught, I am confident, without much trouble. Why was he not caught at Orange River below Hopetown? Because the commanding officer of one column wanted the credit of doing it with his column alone, while one of the best columns, one which consisted of good tried Colonials principally (the Kimberley

column), was left to keep communication open with Plumer, and took no part in the surrounding. De Wet was in a trap in the bend of the Orange River, swollen, impassable, and yet he got out and *did not go* through the river, and that with all his force, though our troops were *round him*! Anyone can thus judge that there must have been something most glaringly wrong—and that something was jealousy, deplorable jealousy. A nation's cause, the honour of the flag, everything, counted as naught, everything endangered for the aggrandisement of self, in so many instances.

The Boers, now driven to desperation through the reckless burning of houses and the wholesale destruction of their property, took every opportunity they could to do likewise, and one can only be surprised that, under these circumstances, kindness was, as a rule, shown to prisoners they captured, excepting such of their own countrymen who had taken up arms against them.

Referring to wholesale destruction, I have been an eye-witness on more than one occasion to ruthless slaughter of thousands of sheep and goats, and on one occasion, near Boshoff, a number of young horses and foals were shot by orders from our headquarters. All this stock could have been sent away into safe places, and would have greatly assisted in restocking the country. Many men, hangers-on to columns, and in some cases the Loot Masters (or O.C. Captured Stock) made pots of money out of captured stock. Many a man I have heard say since, "Why did I not know what I know now?" Many men, who should

have been, were not above suspicion. Thousands that had been pressed out of the British taxpayers might have been spared them if all the captured stock had gone to its legitimate account. Those who had fought hardest and lost so much, as a rule, fared the worst.

Some of the corps were allowed a portion of the loot they captured, but not all. *Kitchener's Fighting Scouts* were allowed this privilege amongst others. I tried to get the same for my men, but this was not allowed; why the distinction, no one could tell me. *Kitchener's Fighting Scouts* may have been allowed the extra because they bore the name of the General Officer Commanding. Why they were called *Fighting Scouts* I cannot tell; the inference is that the others were not. Whereas my experience of scouting corps, or corps of scouts, was that they always came in for the rough knocks, and in many cases had all the fighting to themselves before the columns came up.

Our stay at Kimberley was a short one. We started on convoying again to Koffyfontein under Major Chamier of the R.A., who took Colonel Milne's place. The usual scrimmages took place with the enemy. We got as far back as Jacobsdal, from whence we went to Pietersburg, in the Orange Free State, to bring out all the Dutch families. Boers held the ridges near Pietersburg which the scouts, supported by the Cape Police, routed them out of. After placing strong pickets on different points where I considered it necessary, I rode into the village, and in passing a store noticed a waggon

drawn up in front of it. An officer I knew called to me, and as I turned towards him, he said, "Dennison, old chap, do come and help us here; we have a woman to load up and cannot understand her; she speaks nothing but Dutch, and is a perfect fury." I dismounted and entered the dwelling with the officer, where I found in the front room two other officers and a fine big woman who, with her hands on her hips, looked daggers at me when I went in. I spoke to her in Dutch and said, "My good woman, our orders are to load all the families up and take them to Kimberley, and it is of no use for you to try and obstruct us; the orders are such, and all must go. If you require any assistance we will give it to you." "I don't want your assistance, I am able to help myself; but have your dirty Tommies driven out of my shop, they are robbing me." I spoke to an officer and all the men were ordered out of the shop, then said, "Now, do not delay, but pack up what things you require to take with you." "I shall take my own time," she said. "Who are you that you order me in my own house? Get out, you dirt." On which I turned to the officer who asked me to help and said, "I shall leave you the further honour of dealing here; I'm off." After some trouble and some forcible loading of irate Boer women, some of whom were gently but firmly lifted into the waggons amidst curses, screams, and prayers, and the sarcastic but gentle admonitions of Tommy, who, with all his faults, was ever kind to the weak, and generally especially so where women and children were concerned.



The British private soldier and N.C.O.'s. have gained the respect of friend and foe in South Africa as a rule; would that as much could be said for all others.

On starting, after about three hours' delay, from Pietersburg the women all began to sing the Free State National Anthem. One was inclined to lose one's temper sometimes, but oftener to admire the patriotism shown in the States.

Again and again did we go to Boshoff, Koffyfontein, Daniel's Kuil, Campbell, and Griquatown, nearly always in charge of convoys—Major Paris now in command, as Major Chamier was away on sick leave—at times in search of Boer commandos.

On one occasion, after having safely delivered our convoys at Boshoff, we marched at midnight to attack some Boers said to be near a large pan. We surrounded the place quietly and quickly before daylight, but the Boers had fled, and we returned, intending to come again, which we did after leaving our waggons at Winsorton station. Then, with only our mule baggage and ordnance waggons, we started again in the early morning from Winsorton—about 300 mounted men, including Cape Police, Diamond Fields Horse, Kimberley Light Horse, and a squadron of New Zealanders, besides some Yeomanry. We camped that night near a large pan.\*

That evening I was with Major Paris and Captain Gorton, R.A., still staff officer (good old Gorton! we all liked him). The major told me it was his wish to cover a big front next morning, and was

\* Pan—a small inland lake supplied by rainfall, usually dry.

going to put the Cape Police on my screen right and the Yeomanry left. I said, "Well, major, the Cape Police are all right anywhere, but it will never do to place the Yeomanry in the front line." "Where would you have them?" he said. "As supports," I replied; "we shall then with the Cape Police cover six miles front." He agreed; and the next morning we started at three o'clock, and had to pass through about three miles of "Vaalbush," through which the screen rode in fairly close order, but as it became light extended to the limit, viz., 300 yards between half sections and 50 yards between single files. Captain Gorton had just ridden up to us (Captain Browne was riding with me) with an order from Major Paris to halt, and he said, "Do you know you have the Yeomanry on the left of your left screen flank this morning?" "No," I replied, "I did not know it, for Major Paris agreed with me last night not to place them there. However, we may expect trouble ere long, and the firing, I expect, will commence from that ridge on the left," pointing as I said so to a stony ridge about two miles on our left; "and I should not be at all surprised that the Yeomanry will catch it as usual." Barely had we ridden a hundred yards when heavy firing was reported on our left, and we shortly also heard it. Presently a galloper came up from Major Paris with an order for me to go to the assistance of the Yeomanry, who had got into a mess. I quickly got my left flank of screen and supports round, and away we went towards the firing. The Boers gave way as we advanced, and were chased by us for about four

miles to a farmhouse, where they took cover behind the buildings and kraals, from which they opened fire on us, when I sent back to Major Paris, asking for a gun and that a squadron of our mounted men be sent across behind the Boers; but my request was refused, and an order with it that I was to return at once, which I did, disgusted, for we had Jacobs and Erasmus' men at our mercy. On returning to the column I asked Major Paris if he could place some other unit in the advance to scout, as my horses were tired. He replied that the Cape Police would do so. We rode along the road in column of fours, when on reaching a dam at a farmhouse I ordered the men to water their horses. All rode into the edge of the dam, as did Major Paris and Captain Gorton, when suddenly a shower of bullets came over us from the ridge about 300 yards in advance. One of the New Zealand contingent was killed a little beyond us. We immediately galloped over the ridge on the right, but the Boers had cleared after firing at us.

We then marched on and camped at a farmhouse in the flat. A strong picket of Imperial Yeomanry had been left on a plateau about 1,500 yards to the west of the camp; the horses were securely picketed, when I heard shots in the direction of the plateau, and on rising (for I had been resting alongside of the waggon) I saw men galloping from the plateau towards us, and, guessing what it was, I at once shouted to my men to saddle up and mount at once. The men, trained to act promptly, were quickly in their saddles and followed me in straggling order,

but soon were in extending line. We galloped swiftly forward, the New Zealanders following us close, through two wire fences, which my wire cutters on the order raced forward and cut, so that we were not delayed. We gained the plateau just in time to stop the Boers from getting on to the top, and drove them pell-mell back, with the loss, as we heard later, of five men wounded, three of whom died of their wounds. Had the Boers got possession of the ridge we should have had a hot time of it in camp. As the Boers retired beyond the range of our rifles, we noticed a solitary horseman riding slowly towards us, and to our surprise, when he came up found it was one of the men belonging to the column, and who had been a scout, one of my men, Page by name, but then a corporal in the D.F.H. He stated he had been sent back to see about some oxen that had been left behind, when, on rounding some koppies beyond the plateau, he found himself surrounded by Boers, who relieved him of his horse, arms, ammunition, and other equipment, and took him with them; that the Boers saw the picket on the hill, and crept up to within about 500 yards and opened fire, with the result I have stated.

I left a strong picket of my own men dismounted, taking their horses back to camp. I knew I could rely on them, and the horses could be fed in camp, as they had done their share of hard work since daylight, and it was then about midday. Major Paris informed me that we were to go on the next morning to meet a portion of Lord Methuen's division under Lord Erroll. We started at three o'clock the next morning,

and just as it got light enough to see I noticed fresh waggon and cattle tracks in and along the road ; it had been raining the night before, and had ceased just before we started from camp, and the tracks were after the rain, thus the trek was not far ahead. My men from the screen front also reported the tracks of a few mounted men, and a little later, as we galloped on the track, a large body of mounted men under a ridge in our front was sighted. I called a halt, and reported back to Major Paris, then advanced at a walk until orders arrived. As we neared the mounted force, and when within about 2,000 yards, firing commenced on us. I guessed they were a portion of Lord Erroll's column, and sent a man on to see ; but they fired so hotly on the man that he turned and came back. Owing to Lieutenant Brunton, who was in charge of the left screen flank, we at last got them to understand that we were not "Baws." Brunton had managed to get a man well round on the left showing a white rag.

Firing into one another by our columns was not infrequent, and, in fact, I sometimes thought Tommy was not always particular what he shot at as long as there was an opportunity at *something*. My men had on several occasions been fired on by one or other of our columns, and on one occasion had rather a hot time for a little while under fire of Colonel Plumer's guns and pom-pom near Hopetown.

After meeting Lord Erroll, we returned to our camp. I omitted to state that the Boer trek, which had fled from us, were captured by Errol's men, excepting the mounted men, who had escaped. On

our arrival at camp—for we had left all our waggons, well protected, behind when we went to meet the other column—after a rest for that night, we trekked on to Boshoff, and then back to Kimberley. Then, after a few days, started to join hands in a big drive on to Pietersburg. Nine columns were on this drive. We started from about twelve miles beyond Jacobsdal, the Kimberley column of the extreme left wing joining us (or rather should have been joining us); on our right was Colonel Henry's column. I say should have been, but for some reason or other was not quite in touch with us. The greater part of his men consisted of the M.M.R., *i.e.* Metropolitan Mounted Rifles. Now we had seen some, and in fact too many of this untrained kind, but nothing to equal the M.M.R. I wonder that Colonel Henry had any hair left on his head or any sound brain cells within. What object was there in sending out such men from England? But the war revealed so much—too much!

To give my readers an idea, a number of the M.M.R. were acting as a portion of the rear-guard to Colonel Henry's convoy. A halt was called. The men behind dismounted and let their horses go, as they lay listlessly about on the grass. It was late in the afternoon, and the sun was about going down. The convoy had moved on; our M.M.R. rear-guard was not aware of the fact. The horses had turned about and were grazing with their heads in the direction they had come, for the breeze was from behind, and animals invariably graze towards the wind. When suddenly the young

officer in charge got up, looked round, the column was gone—was out of sight. They quickly mounted (or as quickly as they could), and noticed some horsemen riding away from them. They followed backward on their course, oblivious of waggon tracks or any other tracks. There were some men in front of them; it was all right; they followed. When suddenly the men in front of them disappeared over a rise, our young officer with his M.M.R. appeared on the rise and dismounted to the order "Hands up!" The Boer leader, who spoke English, said, "Now, gentlemen, I am sorry to have misled you, but I will not do so any further. Kindly hand over your horses and equipment. I do not want anything belonging to you privately; that you may retain." They were quickly relieved of all Government property. "Now, gentlemen," said the polite Boer leader, "you have been going in the wrong direction. Go back on these waggon tracks; they are big, you cannot miss them, and you will find your friends, no doubt, to-night. Good-bye, better luck to you." And off they rode, leaving our officer and party of M.M.R. to wander back, wander anywhere in the dark.

The day was just dawning when I arose on the morning following the incident I have stated. I was sitting by the fire, for our cook was an early bird, when I heard a picket challenge on the opposite side of a little stream we had the night before camped on. Then the inner guard challenged, and then my horse guard. Immediately after a voice behind me said, "Good morning, sir." I looked round, and noted

several men—thirteen, if I recollect rightly. "Hullo! where do you spring from?" I said; "M.M.R., are you not?" "Yes," replied a voice, "and we have been prisoners, and I am the officer in charge of the party." "Come to the fire, and we shall presently have some coffee; and let your men close in too, for they must be cold; a cup of coffee each will warm them." The young officer sat down and gave me the story as I have told it.

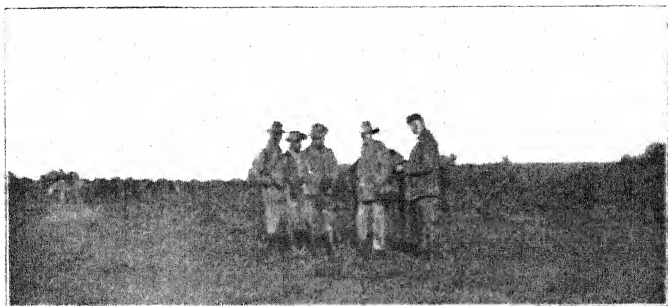
Needless to say, our drive was not a success; we captured a few youths, one blind, and one maimed man. These were found at their homes; did not know they would be wanted, they said, or they would have gone into the hills. They were captured by Colonel Henry's column, who dashed forward in a most gallant manner as we neared what was supposed to be the enemy's position (without the enemy). We were very slow on the left, not at all gallant, for we knew the enemy had cleared across our front the night before. We saw the tracks of at least 300 horsemen that morning. After returning from the drive, went to Smidt's Drift with a large convoy, part for Daniel's Kuil and for Griquatown. At Smidt's Drift Major Paris divided his convoy, sending on that for Griquatown in charge of Captain Humby, of the 74th I.Y., with his men, about a squadron, some details of the D.E.O.V.R., a pom-pom in charge of Lieutenant Kidd of the Kimberley Artillery, and some other details, making a force of about 850 men; while we, with the convoy for Daniel's Kuil, went on to that place. We got safely through, but that going to Griquatown was attacked at the Rooi Koppies, and



had it not been for the gallantry of the 74th the convoy would certainly have been captured by the enemy. They bravely charged the ridge from which the Boers were firing from about 300 yards off and drove them off, thus gaining the position commanding the road. Their losses were about twenty-three killed and wounded, if I recollect rightly. Lieutenant Despard, of the 74th, did remarkably well on this occasion, as, in fact, did all the officers and men. Lieutenant Kidd did good work as well, not only with his pom-pom, but individually. Major Paris made a grave mistake: he had a strong body of scouts, and should have sent a troop at least with Humby, who had no scouts with him, more especially as he knew that the enemy were in reported strong force in the neighbourhood of Griquatown.

We heard the news at Daniel's Kuil. It was first reported that the convoy had been captured; then, later, we got the correct details. We went from Daniel's Kuil to Campbell, where our waggons were left with the infantry of our column, and then went to meet Captain Humby returning from Griquatown, which we did at Rooi Koppies, the scene of their battle and victory. Good old Irish Yeomanry! we were all sorry when you left us.

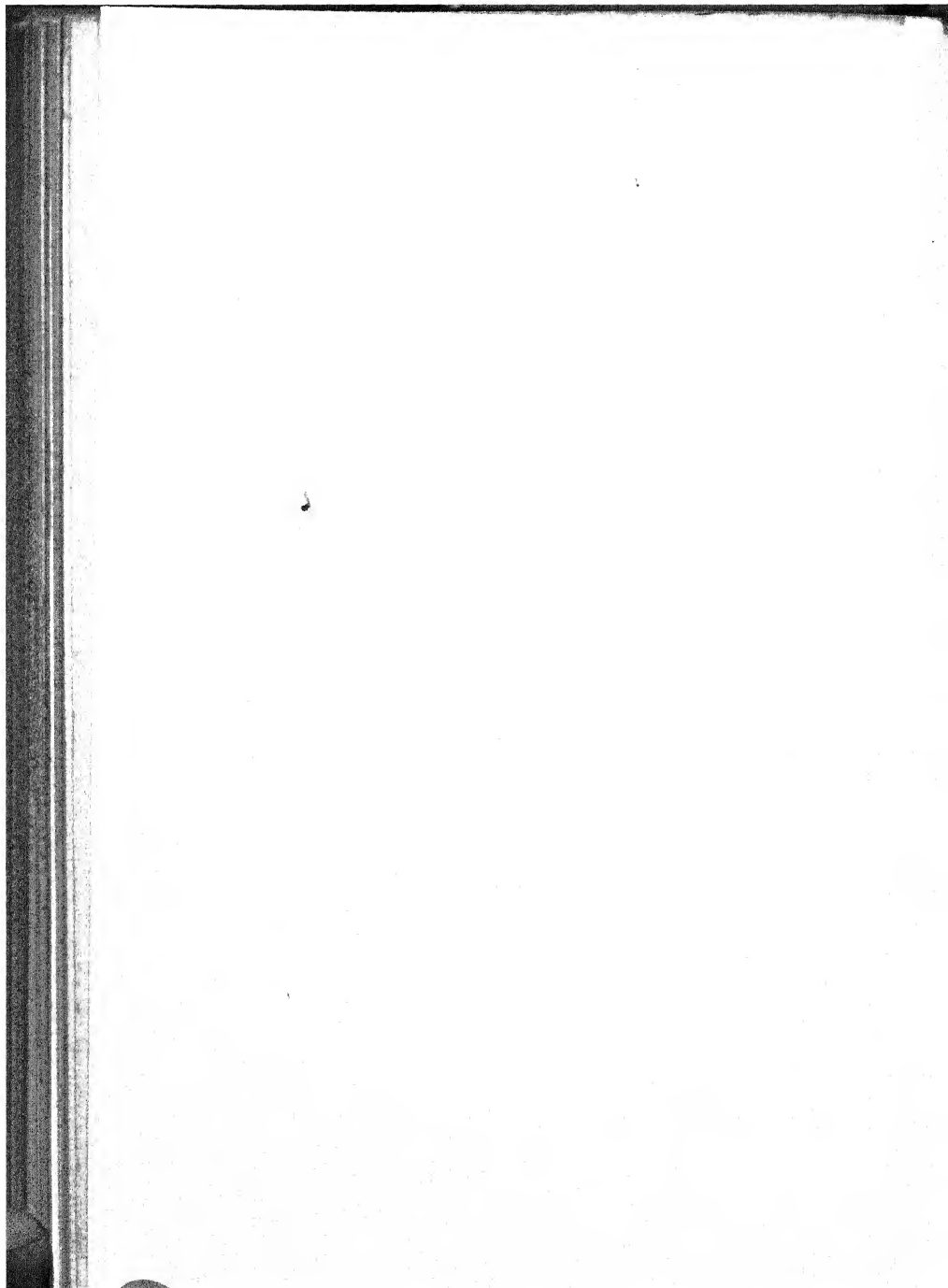
On one occasion, while away to Vryburg on leave, information was sent me that our column was marching the day following for Pietersburg again, and that my servant, with a section of men, would be left to wait my return to Kimberley camp. I returned the next day to Victoria Stables, where, by the kindness of De Beers Company, I had my lines, during the



OFFICERS OF THE KIMBLELEY COLUMN  
A snap on the line of march during a temporary halt



LIEUTENANT KIDD, D.F.A., AND HIS POM-POM



whole of my stay with the Kimberley column, in charge of my son Harry, who held the rank of lieutenant and was my quartermaster and paymaster. Nothing went wrong in Harry's case—in fact, he was my mainstay in camp.

I caught up to the column that night about nine o'clock, having got in by train about five p.m. We camped that night about nine miles south of Kimberley on the Paardeberg road, and the next morning at daybreak we moved on again. I accompanied the screen myself on the left, as it was reported that the Boers were about in fair numbers. Beyond a few in the distance, we saw none to oppose us, but on nearing the river some shots came from the ridge opposite. After posting a couple of pickets on points commanding the drift on the east, I galloped with the balance of the left flank to the drift and crossed, taking possession of all the ridges near the drift; then sent a troop at full gallop to get a position at the foot of the main ridge in our front; but the fire was too much for them, and they fell back to where I was. We, however, succeeded, by aid of the guns which had come up, in shifting them; in fact, as we got round on their flank they cleared. The convoy got safely across, and we camped at a pan of water in the flats. About an hour after camping, some of the officers, among whom was the captain of the New Zealand squadron, said they were anxious to see Cronje's last stand, and whether, if permission was granted by Major Paris, I would go with them. I agreed, and shortly after saw Major Paris, who said he would allow them to go, providing

I went in command. I agreed, and we started about two p.m. One captain of the 4th Scottish Rifles, staff officer to Major Paris, also accompanied us. We reached the memorable camp of General Cronje about an hour later, and after placing a couple of look-outs on points of vantage, I allowed the party to scatter and look for curios. We were about sixty-five all told, chiefly New Zealanders, scouts, and some Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who were attached to me under Lieutenant Holroyd. After spending about half an hour, I gave orders to return—the column had meanwhile gone on—and after some little difficulty got the party collected, and we started back through the river, when I at once extended the men and sent out the necessary scouts. When almost opposite Kitchener's Kop (so called, being the position held by Lord Kitchener during the shelling of Cronje's camp and trenches along the river banks), firing was reported on our left, and shortly after I noticed two of four men, New Zealanders, I had sent forward on our left point coming on at a gallop. I rode from my position in front of the men to meet them, and, as they rode up, said, "What is the matter?" One of them, Andrews by name, replied, "My mate's horse is shot, sir, and I think he is wounded under the hill there," indicating Kitchener's Kop. "Go," I said to the other man, Williams, "and tell Captain — I say he must change direction to the left, so as to get round the Boer position on the kop." I said to Andrews, "Come along," and rode at a fast gallop for the ridge with only my servant and Andrews with me, never doubting that my order

would have been obeyed. I was barely 300 yards from Captain — and the men when I sent Williams. My servant suddenly said, "They are running away, sir!" I looked round and sure enough the whole of the men were galloping in the opposite direction. "You go," I said to him, "and tell Captain — or Captain — they must come to my assistance with the men." A few bullets were passing over our heads in the direction of the retreating party.

Captain — was near me when I galloped to the left to meet the two men. Had my orders been carried out, the left flank of the men would have been immediately behind me, and the whole position would have been different, as the result proved—for they rode right into a trap and lost several men wounded and taken prisoners in the wild and disgraceful flight.

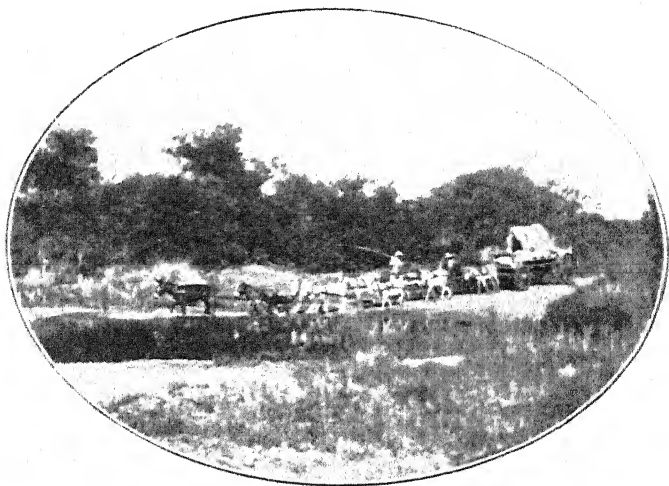
On getting about 100 yards from the kop we saw the wounded man Atkinson walking slowly down the foot of the hill, but suddenly drop. I saw nothing could be done, and galloped along the foot of the hill in the direction the column had gone. The fire was directed on us by the Boers, and the bullets came thick and fast from the summit of the hill. Andrews' horse was shot dead under him. I drew in, and he walked alongside my horse; we were neither of us hit, though the fire continued for several minutes on us after the horse fell, then suddenly stopped, which I thought strange, as we were still within easy range. We had barely gone 500 yards from where Andrews' horse was killed when

three Boers dressed in khaki suddenly rose from behind some boulders. I said, "There are three of the scouts," taking them to be three of our men I had sent on in our immediate front. Being some 300 or 400 yards, I could not distinguish clearly. A shout of "Hands up!" and the sight of several rifles pointing at us over the rocks proved I was wrong. It was "Hands up!" and boiling with rage and disgust, we became prisoners, and were immediately rushed. They were a party of nine—all youngsters but one, a grey-haired and bearded man. While two were taking my leggings and spurs off, and quarrelling over them, one snatched off my glasses, which hung round my body; another my kodak, while another brute dragged me round by my cross-belt, which he proceeded to take off in a manner that roused my temper, which I showed in a manner most plain. "What is your name, you old —?" the fellow asked in broken English, for I pretended not to understand Dutch. "Oh! Smith will do for you," I replied; and so I remained Captain Smith to them. Had they known who I was, I might have had worse treatment, for I was known to the Boers as the "Scout leader of the Kimberley Column," and we had given them some rough times and were never beaten.

On my demonstrating rather too plainly to the fellow my opinion of him, he raised his rifle from the ground where he had placed it, and said in Dutch to the others, "Give way while I shoot him." But the elderly man interfered and saved me. We were shortly after taken to the back of the hill where some



A SPOT WHERE AN ENGAGEMENT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN OUR TROOPS  
AND THE BOERS IN RUSTENBURG DISTRICT



MODE OF TRAVELLING IN THE TRANSVAAL



others of their party were and their horses. I ascertained from one of the lot—a Cape lad—that they were sixteen all told, and had been placed on the hill by the Commandant Jacobs, who had gone down to the drift we had crossed in the morning, and that our party had ridden right into an ambush, for Jacobs had seen them coming. “Why did your men run away from sixteen rifles?” he asked. “I do not know,” I replied. “I presume they got the orders to do so.” “They were a lot of cowards to leave you,” he said. “No! the men are not cowards; there is a mistake made by someone. My men never run away unless there is great need of it,” I replied.

While we were waiting for orders from their leader Jacobs, the fellow who had treated me so roughly a short time before came up, and several others with him, bringing five more of our men prisoners, and as he dismounted near us, said, “Where is that — officer who cursed me?” “Here I am,” I replied, and walked up to him.

the commandant about this man's conduct towards you." Shortly after this a man rode up and said that we were to march; that the commandant had gone on with the other men to the drift. We all walked a short distance down through the rocks. A horse was then given me; the other prisoners were marched on foot. On crossing the drift three men rode past us from the rear. I heard one of them say, "What are you going to do with the khaki's commandant?" "They will be all shot to-morrow. It is General De Wet's orders that any of the enemy caught of a column that have burnt houses are to be shot; and if I am satisfied that it is a house that they burnt at the drift, I shall shoot them all." They passed on, and I could hear no more, but had heard quite enough. I did not tell the other prisoners, among whom was Sergeant Pearse of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. We rode on for about a mile further, and then halted and camped for the night; the horses were hobbled and guards put on. We were all placed together near an ant-heap, guarded by four men. One of our guards was most friendly, and spoke English fairly well. He informed me that Jacobs had not gone as far as the drift, that he saw our party and halted on the ridges east, and that when our men bolted he laid low until they got close, and opened fire on them, and that several of our party were killed and wounded, and several horses of ours were also shot, and that he believed that the commandant was going down in the morning to see if our column had burnt any houses, and that if it was the case, we would be shot.

I must here state that, after clearing the Boers out of the ridges in the morning, we noticed a dense smoke rising at the drift—there were farmhouses on both sides—and I remarked at the time to one of my officers, "Surely that is not a house burning," for our column did not burn houses or do unnecessary destruction. Major Paris was opposed to such acts of barbarism, and so was I; such are not in keeping with a white man's war, unless necessary in cases of treachery or otherwise. When the column arrived at our camping place, I ascertained that no houses were burnt, only a lot of chaff found in a hut, but later heard that some of our natives had burnt a house.

I had been suffering from colic during the afternoon and that night suffered severely. Our guards did what they could for me, but I passed a bad night, towards morning I felt better. About daybreak Commandant Jacobs rode back, and I was told had gone to see if any houses had been burnt, and that we should meanwhile move further on to a farm a few miles distant, which we shortly afterwards did and saddled off. Here, after a little palaver, a beaker of cocoa was given each of the prisoners, and some boiled green mealies. We enjoyed both considerably, as we were all very hungry, having had nothing since the day before at noon.

About two hours after our arrival at the farm, a messenger arrived from Jacobs with the order that we were to proceed to Jagt Pan, south of Boshoff.

While halting at the farm, I constantly watched the hills in front and listened for the boom of cannon, for I felt sure a strong party would come in search of

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us ; but we were doomed to disappointment, and the force on our column was a strong one. I knew my men, now under command of Captain Brown (my son-in-law) would not leave me a prisoner if they could help it.

I was sent on horseback in charge of one guard ; the man had been in the Free State artillery and had been wounded in the affair the day before through the calf of the leg ; he showed me the wound, but did not appear to mind it. His name was Van der Merwe, he spoke English fairly, was kind, communicative and intelligent. As we were riding along, he said, " But I think you can talk Dutch, your eyes and your manner show you are an Africander." I replied in Dutch, saying, " Yes, as you hear, I do speak and understand your language, read and write it as well, but I did not care to do so before." He laughed and said, " You were ' slim,' for our people are very bitter against the Cape Colonials who are fighting against us. Why did your people not remain neutral, and we should easily beat the English. You are like ourselves, you know the country and our mode of fighting. We fear your Colonial forces. Your raw English we can manage, except your Tommy, your regular infantry soldier ; he can fight, he is a man and does not fear death." " Yes," I replied, " all are not equally trained, and I am glad you give Tommy his due ; he is the best soldier we have of our regular forces, and what England wants more of is mounted infantry, men well trained in both ways." He made disparaging remarks about the Imperial officers, who, he said, as a rule, do not understand their

work. I passed this off, not wishing to show that I agreed with him on that point, which, alas! was only too true in so many cases. But this does not apply to all, for I have met some very fine officers, who were gentlemen besides, though many were of the class of which one met more than his match in one of the Australian contingent. Riding up to the man, who was on a look-out point, he addressed him as follows: "I say, you fellah, any 'bahs' about?" "What, 'bahs'! yes, any quantity. Look over there, glass-eye. Get another pane up, and you'll see a thousand or more woolies (sheep) over yonder." That young officer left.

After riding for about nine miles, we arrived at one Van Zyl's farm, situate under some hills. The owner was an elderly man, who, after shaking hands most cordially with me, asked us into his house, when his wife, a very quiet, good-natured sort, quickly set the table and brought us some food. Van Zyl sat talking to us at the table, and remarked to me that he hoped I would feel myself at home and not consider myself a prisoner in his house. "You and I," he said, "cannot help these things. We are not the cause of the war; it is Rhodes' war, it is a war caused by the capitalists of the Rand. We only must do our duty, though we suffer for it, you for your side, I for mine."

We remained at the hospitable farmer's house that night, as the other prisoners, who were on foot, did not arrive until some time after, and time was evidently no object. A most comfortable bed was

given me, and the men were all cared for as well as lay in Van Zyl and his wife's power.

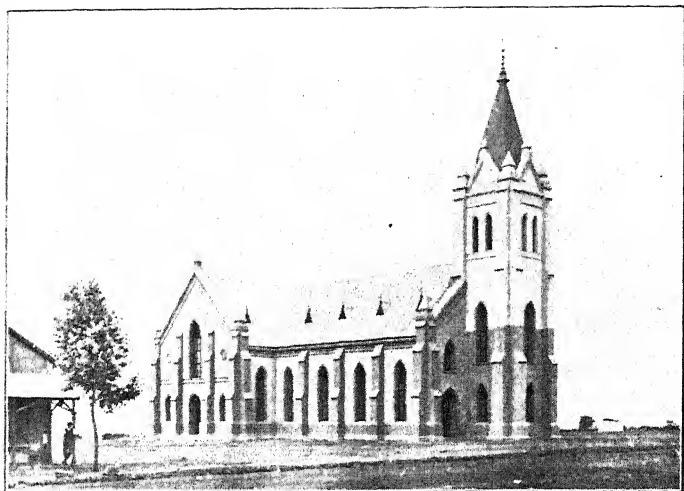
The next morning we went on to Jagt Pan, my guard, Van der Merwe, and myself going on ahead on horseback. As we came in sight of the pan, he said, "Do you see that little koppie standing by itself over yonder, about nine or ten miles away?" I said "Yes." "Well," said he, "if I were a prisoner and in your place, I would make my escape from Jagt Pan and go straight for that koppie; from there you can see Boshoff, which is only a few miles from it, that is just to the left of Villebois Kop" (meaning the kop where the French officer Villebois de Muriel fell.) "Thank you," I replied, "I do not think I shall try just yet." Only too glad I should have been to effect my escape, but I could not leave the men, and I knew that if all tried to escape we should not succeed.

We arrived at a house on the farm Jagt Pan, belonging to Ben Groenwald, who, with his wife and family, were very kind—in fact, no friends could have treated me with greater kindness. We remained at Groenwald's place three days. At night all were placed in a room leading off the stoep under the verandah in front of the house, but during the day I was free to wander about anywhere, having given my word that I would not try to escape. On the fourth day, it was a Sunday morning, we were all marched off north, and I was told we should meet Jacobs the next morning at an empty store about six miles distant. We camped at the store that night, and the next morning Commandant Jacobs arrived with his secre-

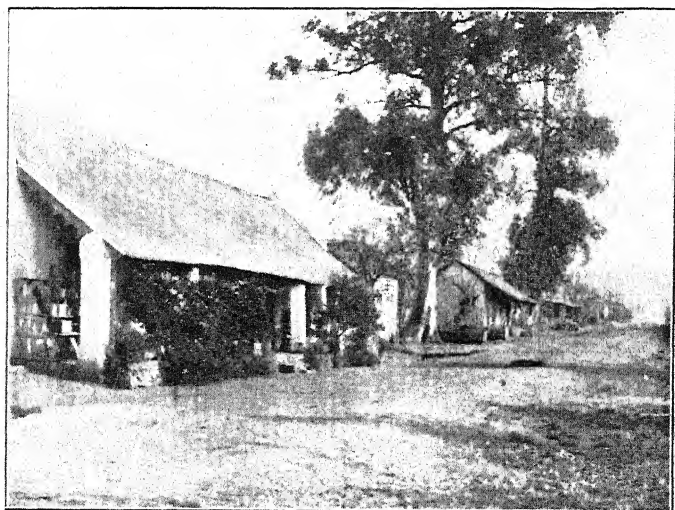


tary, who spoke English well. I was called into the store, and, after greeting me, he said, "I have orders to send you and the other officer" (indicating Sergeant Pearse, who had been called in with me) "to General De Wet, and the other men will be let go free." I said, "But why are you keeping the sergeant; he is not an officer. Why not let him go as well?" The sergeant touched me and said, "No, sir, I go with you." I was allowed to write a letter home to Vryburg, which was first read by the secretary. Shortly after the other prisoners were sent off with a few mounted Boers, to be released near the colonial border on the road to Kimberley, and about an hour after a cart was driven up and we started on our way somewhere. We were told that we were going to General De Wet; but I cared not where it was. I had made up my mind now to escape; there were only two of us, and it could easier be effected than by having a lot together. Our first halt was at a farm about two hours (twelve miles) north of Boshoff, where we stayed that night and slept in an old woolshed on some bales of wool. The treatment here was by no means what we had experienced at Groenwald's or Van Zyl's. However, we got some food—meat only. We did not feel starved. The next morning at six o'clock we proceeded on our way with a fresh driver, and arrived at Bultfontein about three o'clock in the afternoon, and were at once sent over to the gaol—the gaoler went with us. I remonstrated with him, as he opened a cell door and told us we were to go in. "Who is in charge here?" I asked. "The Landrost, Mynheer Hugo," he replied.

"Well, go and ask the Landrost if I may see him." We were locked in the dark cell, no light, except what streaks came from a grating near the roof and through the chinks of the door. About half an hour later we heard voices outside, and then the key grated in the lock and the door was opened, letting in daylight once more, and with the gaoler, Mr. Hugo, the Landrost. After introducing myself and my companion, I spoke about our being placed in gaol; that we were not criminals but prisoners of war. "Well," he replied, speaking in English, "my orders are to keep you both in gaol, but I will take it upon myself to let you out during the day, and at night you will have to sleep in gaol." We were allowed to accompany him over to the court-house, where some food was brought us in a back room. We were not allowed to go any distance from the court-house. A guard armed was always near us the first day; the second day we were allowed greater freedom, and the third day we were not guarded at all. On the morning of the fourth day, about ten o'clock, I noticed that there were several carts and horsemen in the village, and little knots of men were standing talking together, and remarked to Sergeant Pearse that they evidently scented danger, and that it was more than likely that one of our columns was in the vicinity. A young man standing near, whom I had noticed before sitting reading in front of the court-house, overheard what I said and remarked, "You are, I believe, right, and they might turn up to-day." I made no remark, as I was wary and did not know who or what he was, but found out the same day from our gaoler that he too



NEW UNITED DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH, RUSTENBURG



AN HISTORICAL LANDMARK IN RUSTENBURG



was a prisoner, one of the National Scouts, who had been captured near Bloemfontein; that his case had been referred to De Wet; that the reply had come that day, and the next morning he was to be sent to Commandant-General Badenhorst for trial; that he probably would be shot, as he was a Cape Colonist who had assisted in the early part of the war, but had surrendered to Lord Roberts at Bloemfontein and then joined the National Scouts. Great bitterness, of course, existed among the Boers against this class.

I omitted to mention that we stopped a night, on our way to Bultfontein, at the house of Commandant-General Badenhorst. The wind blew very cold during the evening. We were placed alongside a cart in the open, with orders that we were not to move away from there or we would be shot. About eight o'clock one of the guards came out from the open door of the house, which commanded a good view of us at the cart. I said, "I wish you would ask your commandant whether it is his custom to treat prisoners of war as he is treating us, and ask him to let us have a sail, or anything, as we have no blankets." He went inside and came out again directly, saying, "The commandant says that people who go to fight should take blankets with them." "You can tell your commandant," I replied, "that he should teach his burghers better than to take all private belongings of prisoners of war." However, shortly after, an old Cape boy came near the cart and said in Dutch, "Sir, shall I bring you a buck sail? There is one close by on that waggon." I said, "Yes, bring it, for we are cold." The old boy

brought the sail, and we were all right under its folds. A little after, a white boy, about twelve years of age, brought us some meat and pumpkin in a tin dish without knives or forks, saying, "Here, Khakis, is your food," and threw it down near us. On finding there were no knives or forks, I said, "Bring us something to eat the food with." "Eat with your fingers," he said, and went away. I did not forget that place.

I digressed from the details of my story of our experiences at Bultfontein. While speaking to the gaoler about the unfortunate young man, who, I was informed, was a friend of Hugo, the Landrost, and that he was pleading for him, I noticed the magistrate go hurriedly past into his private office, and followed him. As I entered he said, "Captain 'Smith,' I am going to send you away to-day to Theron's laager, who will send you on to near Smaldeel, where you will both be let go." I thanked him. Interrupting me, he said, "Circumstances over which I have no command may place me in a similar position you are to-day in, and I may need your help." "If ever I am in a position to be of service to you, Mr. Hugo, you may command me, and I can assure you it will give me great pleasure to be of use to you, as some return for your kindness to my companion and myself," I replied. I then went out and told Sergeant Pearse the good news. About an hour later, and after we had finished our midday meal, the cart drove up which had to convey us to our freedom, and, after bidding farewell to the Landrost, we started with the driver and one guard. On our way

I conversed in Dutch with the guard, who rode beside the cart. Amongst other questions he put me was, "Whether I knew Dennison of Dennison's Scouts?" "Yes," I replied, "I know him very well, he belongs to the Kimberley column." "And where was he when you saw him last?" he queried. I hesitated to remember when I last saw a mirror, and replied, "With the Kimberley column on the 29th April." "Well," he said, "if we can only catch him, we shall be very glad, for we never get a chance when his scouts are with the English, and we know he is an Africander like ourselves." "And what would your people do with him?" I asked. "Some might shoot him at once, but not if any of the leaders were present. They would send him away to some safe place until the war is over." A nice prospect, I thought, if I should meet any Boer who knows me. But my lucky star was in the ascendant, we met no one who knew me.

On arriving near Theron's camp about sundown, our guard rode off to the camp and told the other man to span out, that he would soon be back. He returned in about half an hour with two other men and a led horse, and said, "They will send two horses saddled for you directly." We waited, and at last, becoming impatient, I said, "We can walk on so long, if you will direct us the road, and when you catch up to us with the other horses we can mount and ride on with you." "Very good," said one of the two men, "do—we shall soon follow you; keep the road you are now on," for we were standing in the road. We bid good-bye to our guard and

cartdriver and walked on. It was a bright moonlight evening, and the air was refreshing. We had barely got on top of the rise above the valley we had left when the two men caught up to us with the one horse only, and no saddle or bridle. They said that the horses had evidently gone astray, as they had not yet arrived, but that if we could both mount the one horse bareback it would help us on for a distance quicker. "Very well," I said, "no help for it; come along, Pearse," and I leapt on to the horse, which was quite quiet. After some difficulty and much laughter, Pearse managed to get on board, and away we went at a slow canter, but after about two miles of it I said, "'Tis far enough, thank you, I prefer tramping"; and I knew poor Pearse felt very much in that direction as well. "All right," said one of the men. We halted and all dismounted. Then, after I had been well posted as to the road, which to take and which to leave—which, by the way, a Dutchman can describe in Dutch better and more explicitly than an Englishman can in Dutch or English, we bade good-bye to our guards and walked on in the cool moonlight air. After about two hours' good walking we saw a light in the distant front which I remarked to my companion would be the farmhouse described to us by the two men, and here is the sluit where our road turns off. After walking on slowly a bit we found the road turning off to the right we had been told to take, which would lead us to the house. We walked on for about half an hour, and on getting within fifty yards of the dwelling, a little boy came out carrying a tin can, and on seeing us ran back to



the front door at once, which was the customary half-door of the primitive farmhouse, and leaning over, he said, "Ma, hier is twee Menschen" ("Ma, here are two persons"). A woman came to the door. "Good evening," I said; but she immediately withdrew and spoke to her husband, who came forward and greeted us in a suspicious manner. I explained our position, and was not surprised at the action of the man or woman, for we were odd-looking mortals no doubt with the torn Boer hats on and no leggings. However, the man, on my telling him who we were, cordially asked us inside, and, while his wife got us some food, I briefly told him our story, and said, "Now we want to start over to the railway siding" (which he had explained to me was Eensogevonden, south of Smaldeel) "at daylight." "You shall not walk," he said, "for I have carts and horses, and will drive you over, and we can start after coffee, for there is lots of time, as the train is due only at nine o'clock." We might easily have walked on the night before to the camp at the siding, but I feared the pickets, who so often fire indiscriminately at any moving object at night. The two men who left us the night before had told us of this farmer, who, they said, was a "loyal," meaning one who was friendly to the British, and directed us to him and the siding at Eensogevonden, as they said it was nearer than Smaldeel, and the best route for us to take.

After finishing a hearty meal we sat talking to our kind host and his wife, and then turned in, a comfortable bed having been made up for us, and we slept soundly till the next morning, when we started for

the railway siding about seven o'clock with the kind farmer in his cart, and arrived there about half an hour later, where we found a detachment of the North Lancashire Regiment, from whose officer, acting as commandant, I received the necessary permits. The train from the north arrived about 9.30, and we started for Brandfort, and then on to Bloemfontein. On arriving at the latter place I immediately reported to headquarters, and met General Tucker, whom I had known in Pretoria previous to 1881 as good old Dan Tucker. Every kindness was shown me at Bloemfontein, where I succeeded in equipping again, and then left by train for Kimberley. On arriving at De Aar I heard shouting as the train drew up to the platform, and my name distinctly so amid the noise, and, as I got out, was at once surrounded by the officers and men of the New Zealand contingent, who were with the Kimberley column when I was taken prisoner. A hearty shake of the hand from the officers, and such of the others who could reach me, while cheering welcomed me on all sides. They were going home, I heard with regret, for with no corps had the scouts worked so well as with that of New Zealand—all good capable men and officers and friends besides. After partaking of some refreshment, their train left, conveying as fine a body of men—of the Colonies abroad—back home as served during the war in South Africa. At the different stations all along the line I was met by hearty welcomes, and on my arrival in Kimberley not less so, as in camp a hearty cheer greeted me. I was once more among my men, and left a day or two

after for Boshoff, at which place it was intended that I should attend the Court of Inquiry ; but after agreeing that the court should be held there, I ascertained that it was not for certain reasons wise. I thus requested that the court might be convened at Kimberley, to which Major Paris agreed. I had heard of the evidence given at the inquiry on the other released prisoners, and that decided me, for one certain officer had tried to clear himself at my expense. On our return to Kimberley, the inquiry on myself was held, which did not, by any means, reflect credit on the officer in question, who shortly after left South Africa, and South Africa suffered no loss. Suffice it to say I was exonerated from any blame. A few days after I got leave to go to Vryburg on a visit to my family.

During my absence the column marched for the Hoopstad district, and had an engagement with the combined commandos of Commandant-General Badenhorst and Commandants Jacobs and Erasmus, and drove them off, effecting considerable loss to the enemy. On this occasion four scouts were taken by the Boers, two of which—Hoffman and Hannay—both slightly off coloured, were shot in cold blood ; the other two were with the Boer waggons a few days later which were captured by De Lisle's column, and the two men released and sent back to Kimberley, where they rejoined the column.

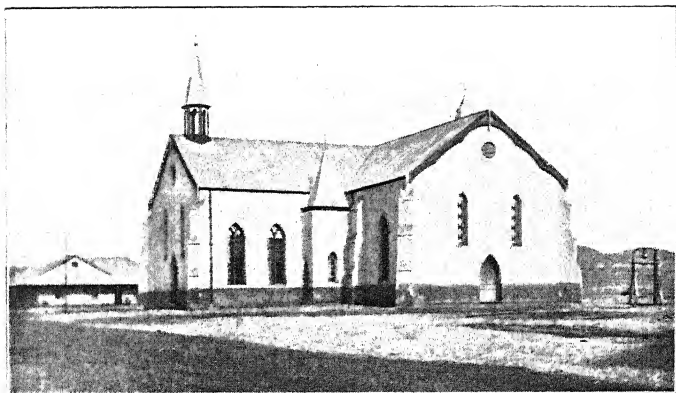
The engagement mentioned took place on Commandant-General Badenhorst's farm. On retiring after the engagement, the scouts were left to cover the rear, and, knowing of the treatment meted me by

Badenhorst, they destroyed the house. Having found some gunpowder, they placed it under an organ in the house, after breaking up all that could be found to burn and packing in on top of the organ, then laid a train and ignited it. An amusing sketch was made by the late Lieutenant Nesham showing the blowing up of this house, and the Assistant Provost-Marshall going, *both* himself and his horse, coat, arms and all, back to discover the cause (for, as I have said before, house-burning was not allowed on our column). The sketch in question was underlined with the words, "Let's scatter and go, here comes the Provost." Many were the amusing sketches made by poor Nesham during the war, a collection of which is in my possession.

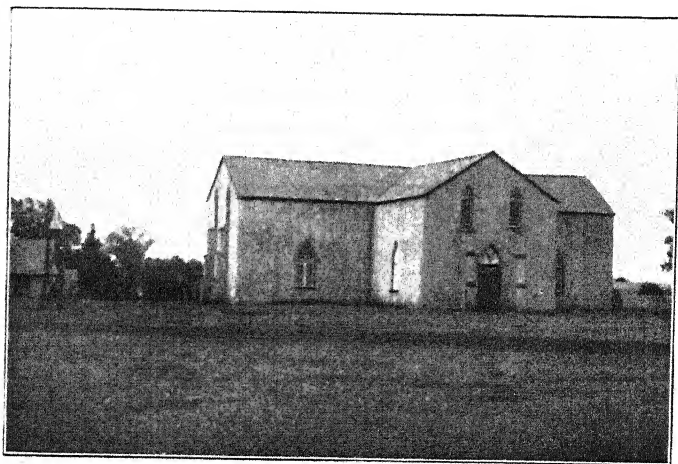
I rejoined the column at Schmidt's Drift, and not very long after we started for Griquatown again with a convoy of waggons, and after safely delivering the stores at Griquatown we went on to Langberg, which Major Paris was determined to see. We had some skirmishing with Boers on the way and experienced a night attack besides, which was severe while it lasted. Two of our infantry picket were killed and a couple wounded. Our animals suffered severely; on my lines alone nine horses were killed, and the Yeomanry also lost heavily in horses. The night attack was near Postmasburg. We returned to about four or five miles south of Postmasburg, and left the majority of our waggons and marched for Langberg, arriving in full view of the apparently smooth rocky range. Our force consisted of detachments of the 74th I.V., Diamond Fields Horse, Kimberley Light

Horse, Ashburna's Light Horse, my Scouts, and two 15-pounders in charge of Lieutenant Nesham; about 400 mounted men besides the artillery. One pom-pom in charge of Lieutenant Kidd, D.F.A. Just before we got into the thorns at the foot of the mountain range, a troop of horses were seen being rapidly driven by some horsemen, followed by a cart, about two miles on our left in the direction of Langberg. The guns were brought to bear on them, on which the horsemen galloped off, leading them, while the cart with six horses harnessed to it succeeded, with the horsemen, in reaching the cover of the bush, and escaped. Despard of the 74th brought the horses in with a few of his men. When we got on to the level in the thorns, I noticed fresh tracks of horses, cattle, sheep, and goats everywhere; but no animals could I see anywhere and not a sound was heard, save the noise made by our men and horses—the gloom was ominous. Captain Gorton rode up and joined me. "You will, of course, close in directly and water your horses first," he said (for we had been informed that we should get water at a dam near the foot of the pass in front of us called Winter Hoek). "Not yet," I replied. "I do not like the look of things; too many spoors (tracks) about here. True, there does not appear to be much cover on the sides of the mountain; but we will know directly." He left me and rode forward; barely had he gone a few minutes, when a rattling fire was poured on us. The screen extended for about a mile in front of me, and the men dropped off their horses as usual and held their ground as soon as the firing started. Major Paris

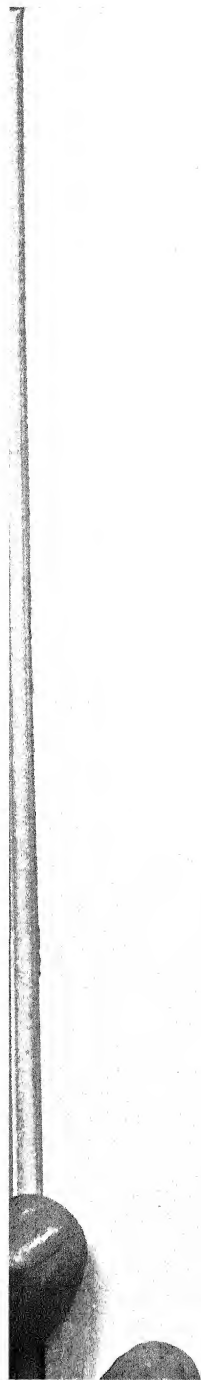
had also ridden up, thinking all was safe. I hastily dismounted and sent my horse back with my servant, then got all the horses back out of range of fire; we were about 800 yards from the Boers on the mountain-side. The guns—two 15-pounders and pom-pom—opened fire under the heavy pelting from the enemy, and under it all Lieutenant Nesham and his men coolly directed the fire of his guns, and Kidd with his pom-pom did the same. One of the guns was sent back some distance to get into better position and cover our flanks, while the Kimberley Light Horse held some koppies covering our rear and flanks as well. The fire was returned hot and continuous from our side, but beyond a few Boers that crept up over the pass or nek in a footpath, we saw no others in our front. The mountain-side looked smooth, but had evidently many crevices from which the Boers were firing. Three of my men of the screen were wounded at the commencement of the firing and nine horses killed. Captain Gorton, we presumed, had either been made a prisoner or been hit, as we could see nothing of him, and some time after ascertained, through one of the screen, that he was lying in the gorge, whether killed or wounded I could not ascertain. Some of my men tried to reach him, but could not on account of the heavy fire. A dash forward was made by my left flank, under Lieutenant Brunton, and by the 74th, under Captain Humby, on the right; but as nothing could be gained they were not allowed to advance again after the first run forward, but held the ground they had gained, lying flat in extended



DOPPER CHURCH, RUSTENBURG  
In which the late President, Paul Kruger, frequently preached



DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH, RUSTENBURG





order. A man lying flat, even on bare veld, is seldom hit, and they should never be too close together.

After about two hours' firing, Major Paris gave orders to retire, which was done without any confusion or unnecessary haste. Nothing was left behind that could be brought out. My wounded were fetched out by the ambulance, but Captain Gorton was in the hands of the Boers. He had gone too far, and did not realise any danger until too late.

We got well out of range of the Boer rifles and then off-saddled. Captain Gorton's servant was sent back by Major Paris with a white flag, and met some men of "Conry's," a Colonial rebel (the commando was that of De Villiers, under whom Conry was serving; the whole lot were, in fact, rebels), bringing Captain Gorton out. He was wounded through the flesh of the thigh. We were all pleased to see him so well out of it, for he was a most popular and good officer.

Major Paris had had his way; he had been to Langberg and come back again. Again and again had he expressed a wish to attack it, and had always been advised by myself and others who knew it not to attempt Langberg, where a few Boers could defy an army. It required at least three good columns to sweep the long and almost inaccessible mountain range. General Pretymann, then G.O.C. at Kimberley, had spoken to me before I followed the column, to which I caught up at Smitsdrift, about Langberg. I told him what I have above stated. He said, "Tell Paris to keep away from it;

he can do no good there." I told Major Paris, but what orders he got later I do not know. However, what might have been rather a serious affair for us turned out better than might have been. We arrived at our camp the next evening, and were met by the officer left in charge, who gave Major Paris some letters and then a wire to me, saying at the same time, "I'm afraid this contains very bad news for you." I would not look at it there, and not until I had left them and walked away did I open the envelope and read of my eldest son's death. I felt the blow almost too much to bear, and walked away beyond my lines to recover myself. The second boy gone in this war, both having fallen fighting for our cause, and both shot by rebels! My readers can better realise my feelings than I can describe them, and care not to dwell on the subject.

I got leave to go to Vryburg, and left the column between Campbell and Smitsdrift on our return in company with Major T. Rodgers, D.S.O., of the Diamond Fields Horse, a fine man and good officer. We arrived at Kimberley the day following. It was on a Sunday morning. I got a warrant the next day and proceeded to Vryburg by train. After hearing particulars, and spending two days with my heartbroken daughter-in-law and her two little ones, I returned to Kimberley, and got further leave from Colonel Garstin, who had succeeded General Pretymann as G.O.C. of the Kimberley district, to proceed to Grahamstown, where my wife and daughter were staying. While in Grahamstown I got a letter from Kimberley informing me that it was Lord Kitchener's

wish that one regiment should be formed from the different units of irregulars, and asking me whether, in case the command was offered me, I would accept. I replied in the affirmative. Then after spending a few days with my family, including my eldest daughter and her little ones, at Port Alfred, we returned to Grahamstown, and I came on to Kimberley, and at once reported to Colonel Garstin, whom I found always most kind, and believe him to be a good soldier and a good Christian besides. Colonel Garstin made no distinction between regulars and irregulars; if an officer or man did his duty, it was all the same to him what corps he belonged to. He proved a good superior and kind friend to me.

I was shortly after offered the command of the combined units and accepted it, but a few days later got a similar offer from the C.S.O. of Lord Methuen for the Vryburg district, and as it had always been my wish to work in my own district, I got permission from Colonel Garstin to withdraw my acceptance of his offer and accept that of Lord Methuen, and left for Vryburg at once, and then on to Mafeking, where I met Colonel Belfield, Lord Methuen's chief staff officer, and after arranging some details returned to my quarters at the hotel. While in conversation with him the next day at his office a wire was brought in from the Commander-in-Chief (Lord Kitchener) that I was to go up to Pretoria at once, as he wished to see me. I started off by the next train for Pretoria, and arrived there on a Sunday, and reported the same day at headquarters, where I was informed the Commander-in-

Chief would see me the next day at nine a.m. I spent the remainder of the day in visiting my friends, after having moved over to my sister's, who, with her husband and family, had lived in Pretoria for many years, and had also suffered in the earlier war of 1881, as so many of us had done.

The next morning at nine o'clock I was at headquarters, where, after waiting a short time in one of the offices, I was sent for by Lord Kitchener, who, on my saluting him as I entered, immediately rose from the table he was sitting at and, shaking hands with me, requested me to be seated. I read Lord Kitchener's face and formed an opinion of his character, and have no reason to think I was wrong. Among other qualities, I felt sure he possessed a kind heart, which a casual observer might not suspect was hidden under the hard exterior. He told me his object in sending for me, and then gave me confidential orders regarding the rebels. I felt dissatisfied, as I had looked forward to being put in a position to clear the Vryburg district; but I made up my mind to carry out the instructions given as fully as lay in my power, distasteful though the duty was. After leaving Lord Kitchener's office, I had an interview with his chief staff officer, General Ian Hamilton, whom I found to be a most perfect gentleman in manners; and I felt also that I had met a soldier and a man on whom one could rely. We talked of the war of 1881, in which he took a part, and was wounded in the wrist at Amajuba.

On my return to Vryburg I was informed that 200 horses had been picked for me at the Remount,

Kimberley. "And what am I to do with horses without men?" I asked. "Lord Kitchener does not wish me to raise a force at present." "Not so," said the officer who informed me about the horses; "Lord Methuen has arranged with 'the Chief,' and you are to recruit at once." A few days later I got orders to proceed to Kimberley, there to meet Lord Methuen, whom I met in presence of Colonel Garstin at the Kimberley Club, and was ordered by Lord Methuen to start recruiting at once. Matters were arranged with Colonel Garstin about recruiting in Kimberley. All arrangements were made, and men engaged to recruit. I then returned to Vryburg to carry out Lord Kitchener's instructions, and started recruiting there as well, when suddenly I was sent for one morning to the staff office, and informed by Colonel Vyvyan, C.S.O. to Lord Methuen, that Lord Kitchener objected to my raising a force at present. I met Lord Methuen a few days later, on his return from Kimberley. He said, "Why did you call the force you are raising 'The Western Border Rifles'? Why did you not stick to the old name, 'Dennison's Scouts'?" "Dennison's Scouts now form part of the Kimberley Regiment," I replied, "and the name 'Western Border Rifles' was thought appropriate." "You must change the name to 'Dennison's Scouts,'" the General replied, "and all will be well; but put your shoulder to the wheel, and get men as quickly as you can." "Very good, sir," I said, saluted, and retired to my camp, immediately paraded my men—about seventy-five all told—and told them the name of the corps was changed, that the old title would be

used in future, and all willing to remain on under the altered circumstances were to step forward. The whole line immediately did so with three cheers, for the old title was the popular one. Thus from "The Western Border Rifles" we became "Dennison's Scouts" again. Men arrived from Kimberley, and recruiting was briskly carried on for a few days, when I was again sent for by the C.S.O., Colonel Vyvyan, who said, "I am very sorry, Major Dennison, to have to inform you that Lord Kitchener adheres to his former wire, and you will have to disband your men." I knew that Colonel Vyvyan felt for me, and also that in him I had a friend, and one worth having—an officer respected by all who knew him, and one who had taken a most prominent part in the defence of Mafeking, though he, like so many others, did not get the credit deserved during the siege of that place.

When I got this, another rebuff, I felt hot, and said, "Well, colonel, where am I? I feel as if I were 'tween the devil and the deep blue ocean." However, there was no help for it; I had to disband, but meantime wrote a semi-private letter to General Ian Hamilton informing him of my position, and also an official statement of my case, with a short allusion to past services, of which I give a verbatim copy as follows:—

"C.S.O., Headquarter Staff, Pretoria.

"Perhaps the circumstances of my case are not fully known to the Commander-in-Chief, I therefore take the liberty of stating them in detail, as I am sure that when Lord Kitchener knows all he cannot fail to see that it is worthy of consideration.

"In December last, while on our way to Daniel's Kuil, I received the following wire from Kimberley:—

"O.C. Kimberley District, to Major Dennison, Schmidt's Drift.

"December 9th, W.E. 398.

"Intend to combine three local corps in district. In this case will you accept command on understanding that your operations are confined to this district? only please reply at once."

"which I accepted. On my return to Kimberley I received from Colonel Belfield a wire, offering me the same command under Lord Methuen, which, as I belong to Vryburg, and was most anxious to work there, I accepted conditionally.

"Correspondence as follows:—

"C.S.O.W.D., Mafeking, to Major Dennison, Major Paris' Column, W. Road.

"21st December, C. 956.

"A local regiment is being formed in this district to include Cullinan's Horse, Keely's Squadron, Brown's Squadron, and others that may eventually be raised up to it is hoped a total of 600. Knowing you are anxious to return to Vryburg, which would be headquarters, this regiment and your local knowledge would be of greatest service, and all above corps have expressed willingness to serve under you, would you be willing to accept command if O.C. Kimberley has no objection? If you agree please communicate with me, and lay the matter before O.C. Kimberley District."

"to which I replied as follows:—

"Major Dennison to C.S.O.W.D., Mafeking.

"December 22nd.

"I gladly accept if matters can be arranged. O.C. Kimberley District is at present away; expected back to-day."

"I then wrote to C.S.O., Kimberley, on 23rd December, 1901, as follows:—

"Annexed wire from C.S.O., Mafeking. I am willing to accept provided O.C. agrees to waive his claim on my

services. I consider Vryburg has a prior claim on me. Have wired as follows to C.S.O.W.D., Mafeking: "I gladly accept if it can be arranged. O.C. Kimberley is at present away; expected back to-day."

"to which I got the following reply:—

"The O.C. District will place no impediment in the way of your accepting this offer. "P. HOLLAND PRYOR,

"Kimberley, 23.12.01."

"C.S.O., Major.

"I went to Mafeking during the latter end of December last and met Colonel Belfield, C.S.O.W.D., who informed me that, as two of the units mentioned in his wire of the 21st December had been taken over by the Cape Government, there would be a difficulty. Later on I met Lord Methuen, on the 8th January, 1902, and Colonel Belfield in Vryburg, when the whole matter was talked over and arranged, pending confirmation by the Commander-in-Chief. I returned to Kimberley, and there received the following wire on the 11th January, 1902:—

"C.S.O.W.D.,

"Major Dennison, Kimberley.

'11th January. For some reason, of which Lord Methuen is unaware, Chief has refused sanction to formation mounted corps this district.'

"I then wired to C.S.O.W.D. asking what I was to do, and also wrote to Lord Methuen and Colonel Belfield, receiving no replies. Then went to Mafeking, on the 25th January, saw Colonel Belfield, who told me he was waiting communication from Lord Methuen about the proposed corps. I returned to Vryburg on 26th January. On 28th I got an order to proceed to Pretoria, as the Chief wished to see me. I proceeded to Pretoria on the 29th January, arriving there on the 2nd February. I met Lord Kitchener on the 3rd, who gave me instructions *re* special work which I am now carrying out. On my return to Vryburg I was informed that 200 horses were waiting me in Kimber-



ley. On the 12th February I got from Colonel Vyvyan, C.S.O.W.D., the following wire :—

“Have wired to G.O.C. for definite instructions as to condition of enrolment, pay, and establishment of corps, also about half-castes. Engage as many white men as you can get, but do not take half-castes at present.”

“I then commenced recruiting; met Lord Methuen in Kimberley with Colonel Garstin on the 17th February, when matters were settled. I was to recruit about 100 men, white and coloured, when I was told on the 5th instant by Colonel Vyvyan that it was finally decided, by order of Commander-in-Chief, that the corps was not to be formed, and that the men enrolled could either join other corps or take their discharge. This is being done, and I am stranded.

“I served in 1879 in Zululand as second in command to the late Colonel Weatherley, of the Border Horse, under Colonel Sir E. Wood. When Colonel Weatherley fell I was appointed to command, and served in that capacity throughout the war with Secocoeni, under General Sir Garnet Wolseley. During the Boer war of 1881 I kept open communication personally with the assistance of two native boys between Pretoria and Rustenburg garrisons until the cessation of hostilities. I lost my all during that war. Prior to the present war I was in charge of the Intelligence Dept. of this district. The day the Boers were expected at Vryburg I went to Kuruman and, acting on instructions from Colonel Kekewich, assisted in the defence of that place with 63 men, under Captain Bates, C.P., and myself. We successfully defended the place against 800 and 1,350 Boers for seven weeks, were forced to surrender when a gun was brought to bear on us (we had nothing but small arms). One third of our force was hit, including myself. I was five months a prisoner of war in Pretoria. Then served as Asst. N.C. of Rustenburg and Zeerust

until the evacuation of both places. Then raised the corps of scouts which I have ever since commanded. What they have done is too well known to require any comment from me, suffice to say that the Kimberley column has never had a reverse while my scouts were with them, which can be borne out by Colonel Milne, General Pretymen, Colonel Garstin, and Major Paris. I have tried to do my duty, have lost two sons in the war, and am still able and willing to work to the end.

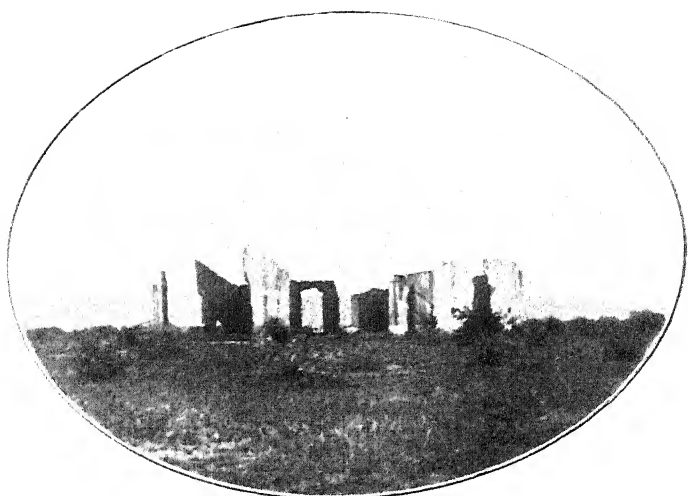
"I have as curtly as possible sketched my case, and leave it to the Commander-in-Chief to judge whether my services and sacrifices justify the treatment received.

"I shall esteem it a great favour if you will kindly let me know my position at present, and from which Department I am to draw pay. I conclude I am to continue the duty given me by the Chief until further orders.

"C. G. DENNISON, Major.

"Vryburg, 14th March, 1902."

In answer to the letter, General Hamilton wrote me that it was the wish of the Commander-in-Chief that I should raise the nucleus of a corps by enrolling fifty Britishers and augmenting them from time to time with such of the surrendered rebels who preferred five shillings a day to a scanty subsistence, and "that my corps for the present would rather take the form of an intelligence corps than otherwise." I now had positive instructions verified officially a few days later, and in a very short time had over a hundred men enrolled, consisting of fifty Britishers, principally South Africans, and the balance of the class I was instructed to enrol, viz. surrendered rebels, whom I would much rather have met in the field as enemies than have their service; but these were my orders, and I carried them out.



WAR RESULT

Remains of a farmer's house near Rustenburg



GRAVES OF MEN WHO FELL IN RUSTENBURG DISTRICT  
DURING THE WAR



It was about this time that two disasters followed quickly in succession, by which two columns of Lord Methuen's Division suffered severely. The Kimberley column, under Major Paris, had been transferred to Vryburg District, and had done some convoy work to Kuruman, besides making some captures of stock and prisoners and scattering the Boers about.

Lord Methuen decided on taking the Kimberley column with the local forces, consisting of some C.P. and specials under Major Berrange, and Cullinan's Horse, under Captain Cullinan. The result was another unfortunate disaster to this apparently doomed commando—that known as the Klip Drift disaster, in which the General was himself severely wounded. Many of our best men were killed, including Lieutenant Nesham, already mentioned, who nobly stood to his gun to the last and fell riddled with bullets. He died as brave men die, a glorious death, a soldier's death! The majority of the column were taken prisoners and later on released. I omitted stating that a detachment of the 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers formed a part of the local contribution and fought, as I was informed, to the last.

No blame can be attached to any particular unit, excepting perhaps some supports who took the safest direction to avoid glory. The remnants of my old scouts, under Captain H. P. Browne, were placed to cover the rear, and in the dawn of the morning saw the Boers in strong force at a gallop, which was reported forward, and I believe extra supports were sent back. The scouts were simply ridden down,

shot, and taken prisoners, excepting eleven with a sergeant, who escaped. Some nine half-castes who were taken, where they stood with the whites to the last, were shot in cold blood. Some of the whites were robbed of their clothing, and in several instances their boots were taken from them, which was the case with Captain Browne, who tied putties round his feet and arrived like others at the Kraaipan siding, hardly able to crawl along with their feet blistered and bleeding, having walked seventeen miles after their release.

I did not accompany the expedition, as my duties kept me at Vryburg, but had all the details from those of the officers who came out, by which I came to the conclusion that a fatal error had been committed in not keeping the waggons eight or ten abreast, as much in a square as possible, with the guns at the four corners, supported by the infantry and the mounted men dispersed, as the occasion required.

I continued my work in accordance with the instructions received from Lord Kitchener regarding the rebels, and was enrolling them besides as fast as possible. The Klip Drift disaster undid all I had done previously.

While negotiating, I got the following note from Colonel Vyvyan :—

“VRYBURG, 6.4.02.

“DEAR MAJOR DENNISON,—The General would be glad if, in dealing with the question of negotiations with rebels, you would not work outside the Western District without first obtaining his approval.

“Yours truly,

“C. B. VYVYAN.”

Previous to the foregoing, I received the following:—

“VRYBURG, 21.2.02.

“DEAR MAJOR DENNISON,—Lord K. wants to know (a) how many men you have got? (b) how many want to join you? Please let me know, also kindly tell me if Cullinan's Horse could be embodied in your corps and any of Hannay's Scouts. I conclude the present establishment of the corps could not be reckoned at more than one squadron whites and 150 bastards, exclusive of Cullinan's.

“Yours very truly,

“C. B. VYVYAN.”

And on the 22nd February, 1902, the following note:—

“DEAR MAJOR DENNISON,—The G.O.C. wishes you to go on recruiting and to equip and mount all men enrolled without delay.

“Yours very truly,

“C. B. VYVYAN.”

On the 5th March, 1902, I got orders that the corps was not to be formed, and that the men enrolled were to be disbanded. Then, later, came again the order to enrol fifty Britishers, etc., etc., as I have in both cases before stated, and only reiterate to make the matter as clear as possible, and to show the false position in which I was placed through contradictory orders.

While busy carrying out the last order, and without any previous intimation, Major Paris came to my office one morning, having arrived from Mafeking the evening previous, and, after greeting me, said, “I want to see you alone.” “Very good,” I replied, let us walk down to the hotel.” We did so, and

finding that we could talk privately on a bench under the verandah outside, we sat down. "Lord Kitchener," said Major Paris, "has been good enough to offer me the command of a regiment to be formed here of a thousand men, and I want to know if you will accept the command of a squadron under me?" "What!" I indignantly replied, "accept the command of a squadron under you! No! Most emphatically no! Not for all the generals in South Africa would I entertain such an offer. I consider it an insult!" "No, my dear Dennison," said Major Paris, "you are one of the last men in the world I would think of insulting, and I must have you with me. Will you be my second in command?" "Yes, Major Paris, I will be your second. You will have the responsibility, and I shall do the work." Matters were thus arranged, and this was the outcome of all my expectations regarding the command at Vryburg.

The corps raised by Major Paris absorbed Scot's Railway Guards, Cullinan's Horse, the Cape Police Specials, Hannay's Scouts, and Dennison's Scouts. About 900 men were raised, all told, but the life of the corps was a short one, for peace soon followed, and, excepting a bit of a skirmish outside the town, practically the last of the war down west, the Western Light Horse saw no service in the field.

The Western Light Horse was disbanded the week following the notice of peace. Peace, after a war of two years and eight months' duration; the war that, it is to be hoped, has taught the Little Englanders a big lesson, and all-powerful England that South Africans are not to be despised as a foe.



## CHAPTER X

I T was my intention to have gone to England immediately after the war, but owing to having matters to settle that required my personal attention in South Africa, I could not go. A Government billet had been promised me, and, in fact, I was led to believe that the Native Commissionership of Rustenburg in the Transvaal would become a permanency, but after repeated correspondence and a personal interview with Sir Geoffrey Lagden, I was doomed to disappointment: but was given in February last year a billet as Inspector of the Lands Department in the district of Rustenburg, under a young man of no South African experience. I felt this most bitterly at the time. He had seen no service during the war and knew nothing of the district or the duties of a District Commissioner (he was Acting).

I had taken up four private horses; there were no horses belonging to the department fit for the work. I used my own for the purpose, being told that an allowance would be made me for the use of them; this, after I had left, was got by threats of legal proceedings, and the forage used for the animals I paid for, although only getting at the rate of three shillings per diem each for them while in use.

I was forced to leave the service of the Land Department by Dr. Jameson, the Commissioner of Lands, for having assaulted the Acting District Commissioner, although, at the urgent request of friends, I apologised to him, he promising that he would not report the matter, which, after getting what he wanted, he did, but made such additions to his report as could only emanate from a man of his stamp. True, I had been guilty of an indiscretion, but did the fault I had committed warrant the punishment meted me after the long services rendered, the sacrifices offered?

I had not tried to accumulate riches during the wars I had served in, had ever tried to do my duty, and was I ever unsuccessful? All I undertook during this last, as well as the former wars, I was successful in. I know that my actions, assisted by my brave followers, saved to the Crown many thousands of pounds during the last war, and yet, for one act was summarily dismissed the service *without a hearing*, without being allowed to raise any defence. That granted the most diabolical of criminals was denied me. This is not the justice of England, but that meted out by an arbitrary departmental administration. What I have suffered cannot make me disloyal, but what will be the effect on our children? The enthusiasm of the past to serve, to shed blood in the defence of the once loved flag of the forefathers, will be a thing that once was; we may drift, as the united states of a South African nation, away from the ardent love we bore the mother country. Once more, England, beware! Your

colonies are your future strength ; do not lose their sympathy in any detail, the least of them is worthy of your most just consideration.

There are many besides myself in South Africa who have suffered ; many who have fought and lost more than money or money's worth ; and how have they been treated ? A most searching inquiry by a combined commission—English and Colonial men—a few thousands wisely spent in time, means the gain of so much for the future. Such a commission of men, wisely chosen, of temperate, unbiassed men with practical knowledge and ability, and not anyone appointed on account of position or influence gained otherwise than by worth, cannot but result in good to the empire.

There has been a great tendency during the last war, as in former wars, but decidedly more so during the last great struggle, to place men at the heads of departments who know absolutely nothing of the duties they have to undertake, and especially so was this noticeable in the transport service, where most ridiculous ignorance was displayed. Our transport officer in Vryburg had a number of waggons loaded and waiting to proceed to Kuruman. It had been raining heavily, and the ground was fairly saturated. This novice gave an order that the oxen were to be exercised by dragging the loaded waggons round the outskirts of the town. And it was done, the deep ruts cut by the loaded waggon wheels were visible for months after.

An order was passed that no private horses would in future be allowed the officers, and any who had

such should hand them in to the Remount for valuation and purchase, but the officer or officers should have the right of repurchase at the same price given for them.

Some odd valuations and opinions as to age were given at one certain remount I know of. Amongst others, a mare of about four years of age was bought, and on being examined by a young officer with an eyeglass, was passed as aged. "What do you mean?" said the owner. "The animal is only four years old." "Do you know who you are speaking to, sir? I tell you the horse is as old as Adam; the bridle teeth are worn away." "The bridle teeth?" said the amused Colonial officer. "Put up another pane, and perhaps you'll see that this horse is a *mare!*" "Ah yes, demme, four years old. All right, take it away; bring on the next horse."

On another occasion a certain colonel happened to pass rather too close to a mule; the animal kicked him. "You damn brute. Sergeant —, what is the number of that animal?" "Number —, sir, of the Number — transport; conductor —, sir," replied the sergeant, saluting. "Two hours' pack-drill every day for a week and spare diet. You understand?" was the order of the insulted colonel. "Very good, sir," replied Sergeant —. I never heard whether the example had the desired effect or not.

That England's army needs reforming nothing has more vividly demonstrated than our last war in South Africa and the result of the War Commission. She has the finest material in the world, but in her officers, as a rule, that material has been spoilt.

With our Colonials the case is different, and I cannot agree with those who say that our Colonial troops would be best officered by Imperial men. No! most emphatically no! If Colonial forces are to continue successful in war time they must be led by Colonial officers and governed by their own commanding officers. The necessity of this has been too plainly proved during our last great struggle in South Africa. Every Colonial, whether he be Australian, Canadian, New Zealander, or South African, who has taken part in it, will bear me out in this assertion, as well as the Regular Imperial officer who is honest to his convictions. How much more would have been done, and in far less time, if this course had been adopted, and besides the aggrandisement of mere puppets been made secondary (if it must exist at all) to the welfare of the cause. Jealousy, most deplorable and little, combined with incapacity, could not result in benefiting the cause.

Great has been the loss of life on both sides, and more especially on ours, during the war, and great the suffering throughout, physically and mentally; deep heart-broken sighs often escape many of us as something occurs to bring to our minds those we have lost. Many, many are the stories told of suffering in the besieged towns—Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking. Vryburg loyalists, though not besieged, were in the hands of the enemy, and great was the rejoicing when relief at last came.

I give here an extract from my daughter Annie's diary:—

"*Sunday, 6th May.*—To-day a Boer telegram,

stating that Lord Roberts had taken Brandfort, and that some of our troops have crossed the Vaal River, and are at Likathlong at last!

*"Monday, 7th May.*—To-day will stand out green in our memories for many years to come. This morning early Charlie Rickett called out to us, while Mrs. Brown and myself were still in our room, that the Acting ('Vrederechter') Justice of the Peace had gone, and it was suspected our men were coming. This cheered us considerably after feeling so down all the previous week. Later in the day Mr. Hendrick hoisted the Royal Ensign. Shortly after, six Boers came along and demanded his reason for hoisting the flag, and told him his presence was required at the court-house. He went and explained that it was his birthday, and he always hoisted the flag on that occasion. He was told not to do so again. In the afternoon we were told that both the telegraphist and public prosecutor had gone and that the Vierkleur was down at last. A little later the court-house bell was rung loudly and cheerfully, so we guessed something had happened. Then came the glad, glad news that the Union Jack was about to be hoisted. Men threw their hats in the air. I think we cried with joy. All was excitement. Oh, it was nice after all the suspense! Our men looked overcome with joy to feel free Englishmen again. How the real Boer fled as the warning was given, 'The English are coming'! How others turned loyal British subjects in the twinkling of an eye! It was all very queer—very happy and very mixed. Hands were shaken; one pair seemed not enough. Yes, we have enjoyed

to-day after all these months. We'll realise now what they meant. Flags were flying all over the town.

"*Tuesday, 8th May.*—Very little has happened to-day. Everybody looks happy. To-morrow we hope to hear where our Englishmen are.

"*Wednesday, 9th May.*—Last night the town was in an uproar; men lost their heads and fired off guns and pistols until we—who did not know what was on—feared treachery on the part of the would-be loyal Boer, and imagined all sorts of horrors, and were up until after dawn fearing the worst had happened to our small town guard—hastily enrolled the day the Boers left. The dawn, however, only brought us gladness. Our anxiety was for naught. One of our men—Morris—had returned and said a force of 15,000 would be here at noon, and the men went nearly mad to think that relief had come at last. At ten a.m. we all—the whole town, English and those who 'would be'—decorated the houses with flags, and rode, drove, or walked as we best could to meet 'our men,' all wearing the dear old colours, even the natives. It was a very glad day even to those of us who knew that among the crowd dear faces of some would be missing, but had left a record behind of bravery and manliness such as we shall always feel proud of, and the thought helped to take the sting away; for to all who have a drop of *true* English blood, honour is dearer than life always. After driving some miles, we met a few of the scouts and learnt that the main body was still some miles behind, and could not be in before noon. So we

returned home for lunch, and then went out again and met the troops just above the gaol. Some of our own C.P. men were amongst them—brown and thin and tired they all looked, but never were men more welcome. We could do but little cheering, we were so few, but it was *all there*, and some of them understood. H. P. Browne was among them, looking brown and well, but thin, and was glad to be back home again. They all looked soldiers, every inch of them. Some were in Ladysmith during the siege, and some had gone to the relief, and now were going to relieve Mafeking. What a record for them all! I.L.H., C.P., and D.F.H.! Charlie Comley was among the I.L.H.; Eldred Peddle and Jimmy Robertson among the K.L.H. We went later to see their camp.

*"Thursday, 10th May.*—All day long men came begging for bread and milk to buy, and we could give them so little. In the afternoon we all, the Mansfields (four), Willmores (three), mother and myself went to the camp and saw the artillery and those lovely English horses, great noble-looking animals. If only father had been here! Both Rob and Angus Hannay are being left behind at the hospital and twelve others, sick with fever. Poor fellows, they are all so disappointed.

*"We saw Colonel Rhodes, the Duke of Teck, and all the officers.*

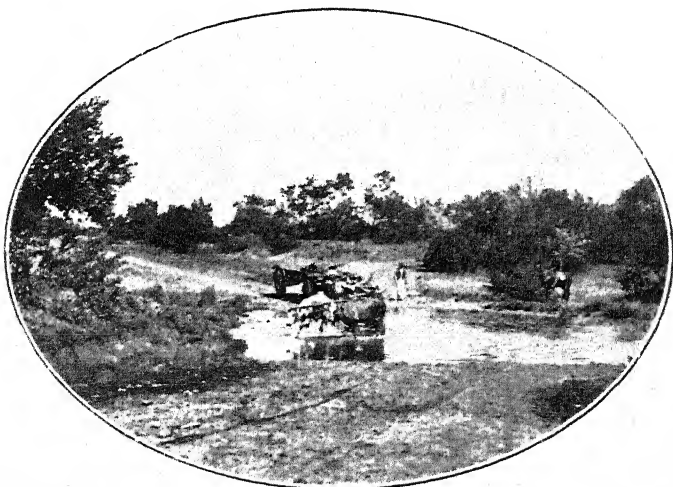
*"The column left at six p.m. We stayed to wave them a good-bye and wish them a safe return, but could hardly see them for dust.*

*"Friday, 11th May.*—It is all over for the present, only the new feeling of freedom and the flags remain

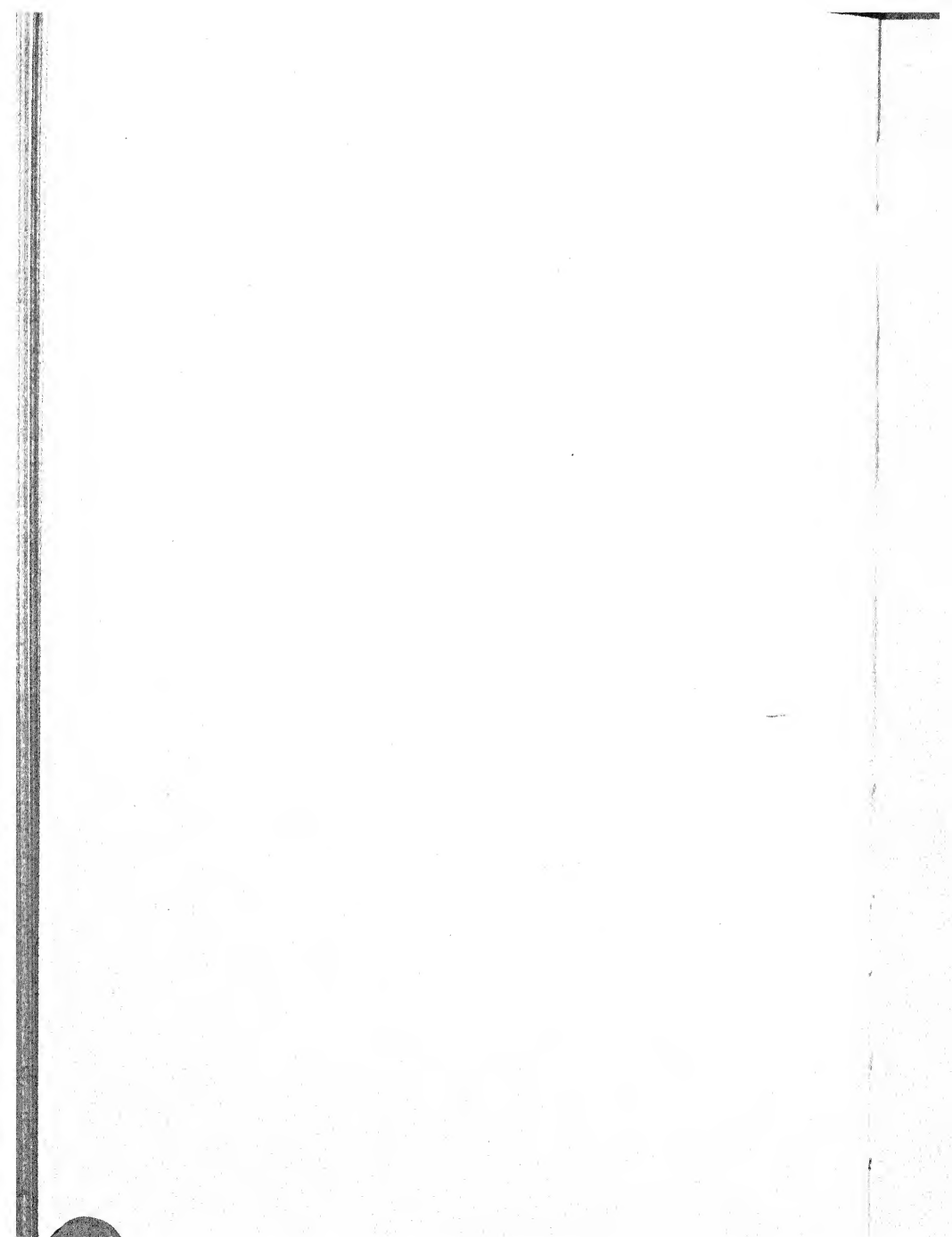




LIEUTENANT ANGUS HANNAY AND HIS FAVOURITE HORSE



OX WAGGON CROSSING STERKSTROOM, RUSTENBURG DISTRICT



to testify to the facts. They were here and it is not all a dream ; they could not leave us any men for the protection of the town, so once more our Town Guard is on duty. Mr. St. Quentin is Acting-Administrator so long, Mr. Gethin and Morris are his clerks. Some rebels' houses were burnt by our troops as they came up to Vryburg. Meyers and — have been taken on to Mafeking, as prisoners, by our column.

*"Saturday, 12th May.* — Rumours that small parties of armed Boers are roaming about on 'mischief bent' have reached the town, and our men are arming some Cape boys to strengthen the Town Guard, and preparations are being made to supply the gaol with food, water, firewood, ammunition, etc., in case of an attempt to attack the town on the part of the Boers, when our men, if obliged, can fall back on it. At the same time, on the ringing of the court-house bell, all women and children are to rush to the hospital, but I don't feel that it will come to anything.

*"Sunday, 13th May.*—Sunday has dawned peacefully enough, no Boers ventured in.

*"Monday, 14th May.*—Nothing has happened today. All is so strangely quiet. It seems almost like a dream that 1,500 men were here last week.

*"Tuesday and Wednesday, 15th and 16th.*—No news.

*"Thursday, 17th May.*—Uncle Dan arrived from Barkly quite unexpectedly this morning (was sent away some time ago by the Boers with a number of others through the Transvaal to Delagoa Bay). Letters from Harry dated from Warrenton, 13th inst.; all well and hopes to be here soon. A

despatch to-day from Colonel Rhodes to Mr. St. Quentin states that they had a brush with the enemy twenty miles this side of Mafeking; five of our men killed and twenty-one wounded. Enemy's losses, fifteen killed and utterly defeated; and that they met Colonel Plumer and his men a little further on. We are waiting anxiously for more news.

*"Friday and Saturday, 18th and 19th May.—No news.*

*"Sunday, 20th May.—News that Mafeking was relieved on Thursday last. Great rejoicing here, etc., etc."*

I give these extracts to show that there were some in Vryburg who had their sufferings also, not of a siege or much privation, but of mental strain. And, besides, all were not disloyal, as was the general impression. Many of the Boers also were loyal at heart, but were forced to take up arms.

I cannot here refrain from mentioning the late Acting Registrar of Deeds, M. C. Genis, an old friend of mine, who I know was a loyal man. He was imprisoned on suspicion, became ill in prison, and only when he became insensible was his family allowed to have him carried to his house, where he died. The Imperial authorities were not responsible for this, and should these lines be read by a certain few, among whom counts one who should have been his friend, I am sure they cannot but feel that theirs was no noble victory over an innocent man. But there are such animals, and they seldom count among the brave.

My tale may appear to my readers as erratic in

some instances. Details do not follow in their regular course, but I have written mainly from memory, and here and there incidents of the earlier stage of the war crop up later, but whatever I have written is fact.

I have gone through more of warfare and danger than most men in South Africa; have been six times a prisoner since the early war of 1865 in the Free State, and twice wounded during the last war. Many, many of those who fought with me through the different wars of South Africa since I was a youth, have fallen; many friends and relatives besides, among whom I count my brother and my two eldest boys, Alec and Cliff; the latter fell in this last war, and the former, who served in my corps, died at Vryburg during the war, but I have been spared through the inscrutable will of Providence.

And now Mr. Chamberlain, the great reformer of England's fiscal policy, is fighting the battle for the empire on a broad and open platform, which gives him scope better to wipe away the Little England feeling which so largely dominates Great Britain in England. May his efforts prove successful in building up the empire by rescuing its trade, now drifting away into foreign hands, simply for want of Protective measures. People of England, cast aside the scales of prejudice from your eyes, and be convinced that Protective measures, as far as foreign importations are concerned, are for your individual benefit and the prosperity of the Empire. And in South Africa, my native country, may the rule of a Progressive Government prove in truth the means of bringing about

a united South African Dominion, which shall in time become one of the strongest arms, if not the strongest, of England's colonies, when Progressive and Bond parties run on racial lines shall be of the past, and on one broad platform, dropping all former differences, work as one great South African nation in common cause for the building up to a greater, nobler standard, with all her faults, the greatest and grandest power of the world.

THE END

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